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Anti-tax crusader spurred on by his Christian faith

The man behind BC's HST battle

Chris Steenhof

VANCOUVER, B.C. – Bill Vander Zalm is facing one of the biggest challenges of his life with the same relentless energy and passion that characterized his political career. The colourful former premier of BC is at the forefront of the current fight against the HST, a deeply unpopular tax implemented by the British Columbia provincial government on July 1 of this year.

The HST is a tax that harmonizes the current provincial sales tax with the national GST. The controversy surrounding the tax has to do with the manner in which it was implemented and the fact that some things will be taxed at a much higher rate than they were before.

Vander Zalm was the premier of BC from 1986 to 1991 as leader of the Social Credit party. Before becoming premier, Vander Zalm served in a variety of roles in municipal governments in the lower mainland of BC. He was first elected to the provincial legislature in 1975, under the leadership of Bill Bennett. He filled several roles within cabinet before becoming premier. Although he resigned as premier in 1992 over conflict of interest issues regarding the sale of Fantasy Gardens, an amusement park he owned, Vander Zalm remains a popular figure in BC and people seem willing to forgive and forget in order to support his current efforts to fight the HST.

Vander Zalm's career in the public eye has always been profoundly affected by two things: his immigrant experience and his faith life. His father was a tulip bulb salesman from Noordwijkerhout, Netherlands who chose to settle in BC's Fraser Valley with his wife and eight children. Those early years as an immigrant teenager were an important time for Vander Zalm, helping to establish many of the principles that have guided him ever since. His heritage also strongly influences his political priorities and vision.

"In typical Dutch fashion, I paid attention to the small things," Vander Zalm said in a telephone interview. As premier, he was aghast when he found himself booked into expensive hotels whenever he travelled. Instead, he insisted that his aides find much less expensive hotels and was adamant that those who served in his government do the same.

Vander Zalm has also been powerfully influenced by his Catholic faith, insisting that the existence of the church and the community of believers helped most immigrants through the many difficulties associated with immigration.

Morally grounded

In the early years, his father's faith led him to sponsor over 100 people of all different backgrounds to immigrate to Canada. His mother's example was also significant.

"She taught us to respect all people and not distinguish between particular groups."

Vander Zalm has been impacted by his faith throughout both the trials and triumphs of his political career, and he has faced his share of both. His faith was particularly evident in his involvement in the pro-life movement, both during his time in office and in the following years.

"You can't compromise your beliefs or your faith," maintains Vander Zalm, adding that the present day political landscape

See **Vander Zalm** *on page 2*

The Thanksgiving issue

Refusing at 52 to write sonnets

It came to him that could nearly count
how many late Aprils he had left to him
in increments of ten, or say, eleven.
Thus 63, 74, 85.
He couldn't see himself at 96.
Humanity's advances, notwithstanding, in health care, self-help
and New Age regimens,
What with his habits and family history, the end is nearer
than you think.
The future thus consigned to its contingences, the present
moment opens
like a gift
The brightening month, the green week, the blue morning.
The hour's routine, the minute's passing glance
all seem like godsends now.
At what to make of this? At the end,
the word that comes to us is
Thanks.

Thomas Lynch

Thomas Lynch has published three collections of poems and three books of essays, including this poem from Walking Papers, *due to be released in November. Lynch lives in Milford, Michigan, where he has been the funeral director since 1974.*

News

Preston Manning addresses Christian think-tank

Sylvan Gerritsma

HAMILTON, Ont. – Cardus is a think-tank – a Christian think-tank. It does serious and solid research and analysis. No way could Cardus be squeezed into the common secular stereotype that Christians are narrow-minded fundamentalist anti-intellectuals.

Cardus works hard to have responsible Christian impact in the public square. It promotes discussion of how people and institutions can best contribute to civil society.

That's why Cardus invited Preston Manning. Speaking at the Art Gallery of Hamilton on September 21, Manning, founder of two political parties and among Canada's most prominent living Christian statesmen, surely would have ideas to stimulate discourse about the public square.

Manning did not disappoint. From all the issues he might have chosen to address, Manning focused on two. He did so in a good-humoured, non-partisan way, although obviously from his conservative perspective.

Independent service providers

Manning focused first on what he called the declining trust in government as a helpful agency in delivering services efficiently and in solving life's problems. He cited studies showing that most people still profess to adhere to "traditional values" but have little enthusiasm for a big role for government in advancing those values. Perception is that often government does not serve the values it holds, and even when it does serve those values, it does not deliver or make efficient use of its budget.

So what's the solution? Should we just abandon the idea that most of those services – including individual and corporate welfare – should be provided at all? Should we have a rugged individualism that closes its eyes to the need for such services?

Not at all. But Manning believes that many services may be better and more efficiently provided by private and charitable institutions. So he would encourage independent institutions and charities to provide many health, educational and social assistance services. Among the many ways government could encourage this is to increase the tax benefit for charitable contributions to such institutions. That is why he also supports the proposal to raise the Federal tax credit for charitable contributions from 29 to 46 percent.

Of course, behind this kind of proposal lies the very basic question of what the tasks and limitations of government really ought to be. Manning did not articulate his convictions about that in this presentation. Reformed Christians, however, like those in Cardus do have some biblically based tools (such as sphere sovereignty) which could be helpful in that discussion.

Arrogance of secularism

The second prominent issue Manning chose to address is the increasing pressure to restrict faith and faith language to issues and venues deemed private. He said that most politicians are not anti-religious, but they don't know how to handle it in public life and discourse. As a result they often abdicate to the courts' decisions about religious issues that really should be dealt with legislatively. He cited the fifty-year-long Wilberforce campaign in England against slavery as a good example of how to influence opinion and legislation in a Christian direction shrewdly, graciously and persistently.

CARDUS PHOTO

Manning did not address the autocratic arrogance of secularism which wants to drive from public discourse all deep-seated commitments but its own and so often refuses to recognize the faith-based foundation of its own commitments. Here too Cardus and other Christians have tools for the discussion, including the recognition that the neutrality secularism claims is impossible, since all of life is religion.

Manning concluded with a post-script about communicating in a "politically communicable form" that can have public influence. He reassured his listeners that gracious and shrewd Christian ideas can indeed produce good change, even in an indifferent and hostile world.

Sylvan Gerritsma lives in St Catharines, Ontario.

Vander Zalm *continued*

makes being a Christian politician extremely challenging. "Christians today have a difficult time in politics if they practice what they preach."

His faith has also informed Vander Zalm's desire to make politics about people. He remains highly accessible to the public by keeping a listed phone number and answering his emails from everyday citizens. He even conducted our interview from home despite a house full of guests celebrating his wife's birthday.

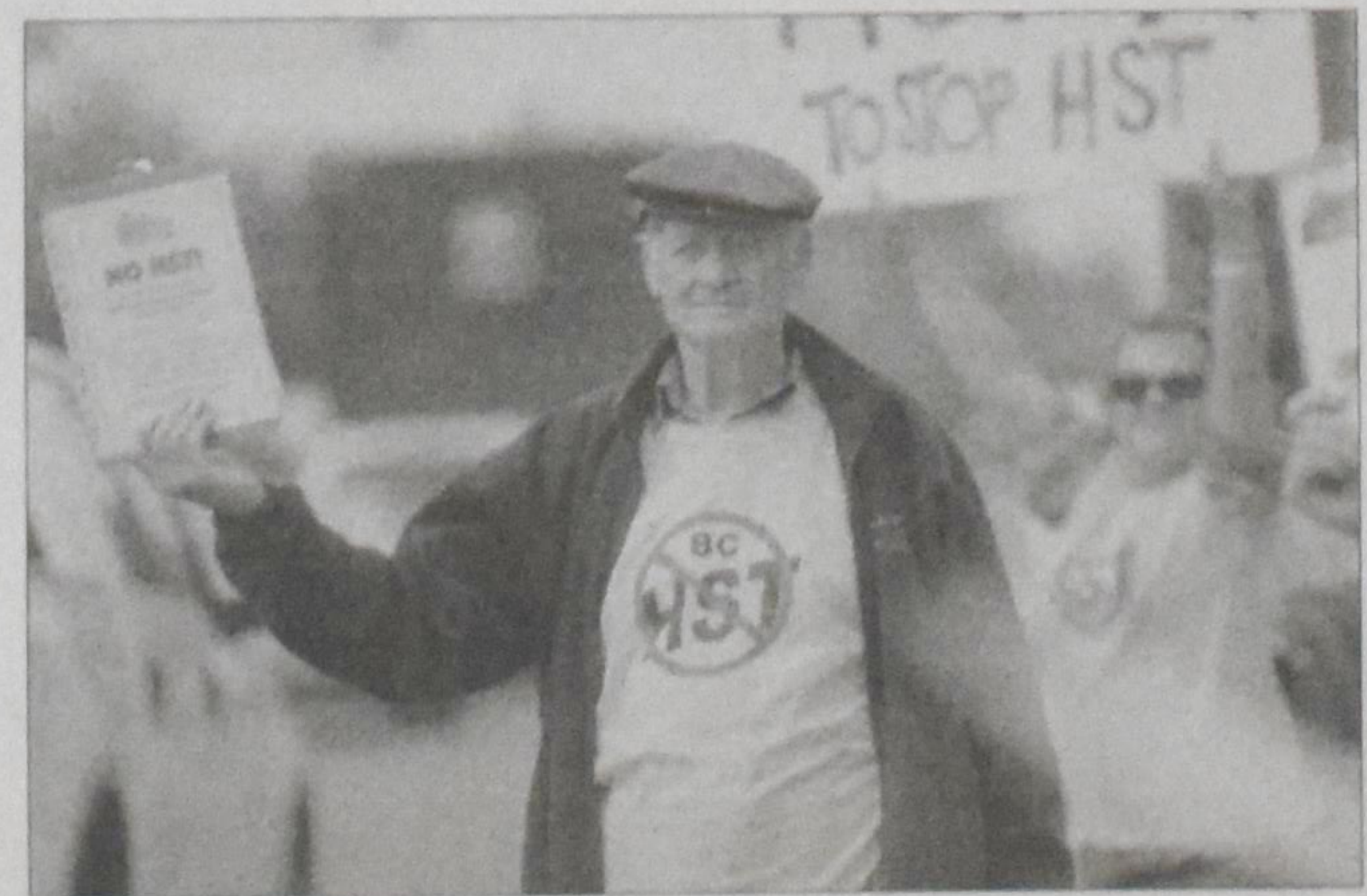
"Politics is about people," he insists.

This sense of community has shaped Vander Zalm's political motivations, especially his current fight against the HST. His campaign owes its success, in part, because the tax is perceived as penalizing the middle and lower classes.

A province divided

"The HST will punish the poor, as they will end up paying the biggest proportion by far," asserts Vander Zalm. While some commentators and economists would disagree with this claim, he maintains that the HST is another step towards the dismantling of the middle class, part of a dangerous progression that has been occurring for many years.

Bill Vander Zalm celebrates with his wife Lillian after the anti-HST petition was validated in August.



Anti-HST rally in Victoria, BC.

Despite his age – he turned 76 this year – Vander Zalm has thrown himself completely into this latest campaign. The HST debate and resulting political storm has had many twists and turns, but Vander Zalm remains unperturbed, saying he's ready for conflicts yet to come.

After Vander Zalm's summer of public appearances, current premier Gordon Campbell tried to downplay the older politician's actions, saying that "Mr. Vander Zalm's real agenda is to get attention for Mr. Vander Zalm." Yet many credit Vander Zalm, and the team that surrounds him, with forcing Premier Campbell to state that he will scrap the HST. if the majority vote against it in a referendum set for September 2011. Vander Zalm was able to get over 700,000 residents to sign a petition against the HST, which is what prompted the referendum. Vander Zalm dramatically delivered the signatures – collected in 85 boxes – to Elections BC's head office with a three-ton pick-up truck. It took the office over a month to count and verify the names on his petition.

Vander Zalm, however, is not satisfied with this step. His organization has begun the process of recalling, in a Survivor-style contest, Liberal MLA's who did not make their position on the HST clear in the previous election. This is a difficult and time-consuming project that will test even Vander Zalm's energy, especially considering he had no idea what road he would be travelling on when he began the fight.

Vander Zalm continues to resist the efforts to draft him into running in the next election, especially with the real possibility of a third party elbowing its way into the electoral line-up. Meanwhile, one thing seems clear: he will continue to put into practice the values, in his own colourful and unique way, that he gleaned from his faith and his humble immigrant beginnings.

Chris Steenhof is a teacher and administrator who lives in Smithers, British Columbia.

Principalities & Powers

David T. Koyzis

God and 'gods'

At the beginning of my introductory-level courses, I read to my students a number of passages from the Bible that touch on the requirement to do justice, especially as addressed to rulers. One of these is Psalm 82, which begins thus in the Revised Standard Version: "God has taken his place in the divine council; in the midst of the gods he holds judgment." The notes in some Bibles indicate that the author of the psalm was alluding to a conception, common in the ancient near east, that the world is governed by a council of gods, over which YHWH is seen to preside. This would appear to presuppose an ostensibly primitive polytheism, which would eventually be supplanted by monotheism. Or so the story goes.

However, the New International Version renders the same verse as follows: "God presides in the great assembly; he gives judgment among the 'gods'." Of course, there are no inverted commas in either the original Hebrew or the earliest English translations. But the NIV's translators felt that the word "gods" was being used in an ironic sense and so indicated it in the text.

Who are these mysterious gods? Is there not only one God? Could there be another group of beings who enjoy the status of gods? Or are there perhaps beings who wrongly claim godlike status, effectively denying the singularity of the one true God? I believe the key to answering this question (at least in this psalm) lies in verses 2 to 4, where God addresses this assembly: "How long will you defend the unjust and show partiality to the wicked? Defend the cause of the weak and fatherless; maintain the rights of the poor and oppressed. Rescue the weak and needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked."

These are concrete responsibilities associated with the divine mandate to do public justice in God's world. The command to defend the vulnerable is given to all people, but is specially given to earthly rulers. These "gods," it seems, are earthly rulers who, like many ancient kings, have the audacity to claim divine status. This conclusion underlies my own metrical versification of Psalm 82, set to the Genevan melody, with which I will end this column:

Judging among divine pretenders,
in council God his verdict renders:
"How long," says he, "shall wickedness
be favoured over righteousness?
Give justice to the poor and needy,
rescue the helpless from the greedy.
Treat widows as is right and fair,
defend all orphans in your care.

"Blindly you grope about and stumble,
while earth's foundations start to crumble.
Gods you may think yourselves to be,
yet you shall taste mortality.
Like earthly kings whose days are numbered,
death's claim on you will not be cumbered."
Rise up, O God, and judge the earth,
to you the nations owe their birth.

David T. Koyzis teaches political science at Redeemer University College, Ancaster, Ontario. His version of Psalm 82 can be found at genevanpsalter.redeemer.ca/.

Fisher's faith

Emily Wierenga

OTTAWA, Ont. – Ottawa Senator Mike Fisher is centered, both on and off the ice – a fact recently cemented by his marriage to *American Idol* winner and country superstar Carrie Underwood.

"Our spiritual bond is something we try to put first in our lives," the 30-year-old has said.

"Mike has improved my walk with God," Underwood, 27, adds. "It's important to me because, down the road, I want someone who will help shape our kids into people who make the world a better place."

Family has always been important to the Sens' alternate captain who scored 25 goals and 28 assists last season. "My parents were amazing, but I was a fairly good kid," Fisher, the middle of four children, tells Wierenga.

Fisher and his two brothers and sister grew up in a Christian home, going to church every Sunday. It was this faith which grounded the 19-year-old when picked in the second-round draft by the Senators in 1998; and it's this faith which sustains him now as he returns to a hectic schedule after honeymooning in Tahiti.

Finding the peace of Christ

Fisher credits his cousin with keeping him accountable. "He's my spiritual mentor," he tells Wierenga, "and has been a big influence in my life. I still have ups and downs, but I know God has a plan and a purpose for me. I have a lot of people who've helped me; I learned from the pressures."

The playmaking centre also knows when to escape. Having hunted and fished since his early years, Fisher, a shy man, finds solace in the outdoors. "Hunting is not just about the kill; I just like being outside," he says on his website. "Hunting is an escape for me. It's just a good thinking time; it's a prayer time."

And it's these experiences which keep Fisher focused. "When you have money, it doesn't really matter. It's a daily relationship with Christ, and through that comes a lot of peace and experiencing God. When you get a taste of it, there's nothing like it."

It's this attitude which inspired the hockey star to create his own foundation, through which he gives to various charities, "because God's provided me with it all."

And it's this attitude which motivates him to spend his summers training hockey

Fisher's faith *continued on p.5*

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Editorial

An invisible grief

Angela Reitsma Bick

"Can we call heaven?" our three-year-old asks. "I want God to send our baby back."

There's no easy way to explain death to children. In this case, it's even harder – because we'd never met the person who died. And, to complicate matters further, not everyone agrees on how I just used the words *person* and *died.*

On July 25, 2010, our third child left this earth. But without the credentials that come with being born, some people reduce the baby to *tissue* and its death to *reproductive loss.* Right now, we are asking the same questions as our daughters: Why do some babies die and not others? Will we see the baby someday? Right now, we are grieving the loss of a child of God, and this grief is enough to get through on its own. We shouldn't have to explain or justify its presence, too. I believe life begins at conception. God already had his hand on that tiny participant in creation. If, as Christians, we discourage abortion because it means lives are lost, then something is not right with how we typically react to news of a miscarriage. It has nothing to do with a "lump of tissue" or "God's will" or what's "probably best." It's the real loss of a real child, and sometimes the only thing that the bereaved parents need is permission to grieve.

Windswept angel by Julie-ann Bowden

What I wasn't expecting

Miscarriage is "the most common form of personal tragedy" for young couples, according to obstetrician Henry Lerner. Fully twenty percent of all known pregnancies end in miscarriage, which is defined as the spontaneous end of a pregnancy in its first twenty weeks. How that tragedy is handled sets the stage for dealing with grief later in life.

At 13 weeks, my baby was approximately three inches long; he or she had eyelids and fingernails, and could already yawn and suck its thumb. I felt an overwhelming, involuntary sorrow at its loss. The sorrow is compounded by feelings of guilt (for being a failed mother; in fact, miscarry is a synonym for fail) and helplessness. These days, we're used to being in reproductive control, and it's a horrible shock to find out otherwise. But in these circumstances – grief, guilt and helplessness – there's a tremendous opportunity for Christians.

Everyone else is saying "Just get over it and move on." We can say "I'm sorry for your loss." When society tries to minimize the grief, we can honour it with loving gestures or practical help. Instead of pretending that the miscarriage was a blessing in disguise, we can re-affirm that every life is valuable, regardless of (gestational) age. Everyone else talks about it in whispers: "What happened?" "She had a" – voice drops an octave – "*miscarriage.*" We can include these unborn children of God in church bulletins, as we do for other deaths that affect church members.

Internet chat rooms on miscarriage are full of bereaved mothers battling bitterness. "It is appropriate to grieve," Christian blogger and home-schooler Melanie Young writes. "It is not appropriate to grieve as those who have no hope." While mourning the loss of miscarried twins, she finds peace in the assurance of a heavenly reunion. "I will go to him," King David states after the loss of his infant son, "but he will not return to me" (2 Samuel 12:22). In other words, Christians have a message that can cut through the pain: your babies are safe. They're being cared for. This sorrow was not for nothing.

It's one thing to say that we'll meet our unborn children in heaven, but harder perhaps to imagine. By September, our daughters had stopped asking for the baby to come back. Then, in less than twenty words, our youngest proved she's come to a kind of acceptance.

"Mom!" she cries, pulling a nursing pillow out from under the sofa. "We need to mail this to heaven!"

Only half listening, I don't realize how far ahead of me she has travelled.

"Why?" I say distractedly. Her answer still makes me laugh. Her answer is a gift, a sliver of understanding from God.

"So Jesus can nurse the baby!"

Angela Reitsma Bick (angela@christiancourier.ca) *is editor of CC. She lives in Barrie.*

"He shall feed his flock like a shepherd,
And he shall gather the lambs with his arm, with his arm
He shall feed his flock like a shepherd,
And he shall gather the lambs with his arm, with his arm,
And carry them in his bosom,
And gently lead those that are with young,
And gently lead, and gently lead, those that are with young."

Lyrics from Handel's Messiah (1741), based on Isaiah 40:11.

Responding to miscarriage:

Pray.
Listen.
Acknowledge the death.
Share your story.
Offer practical help.
Send a note or flowers on the baby's original due date.

–from *Focus on the Family.*

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Letters/News

Obesity is a religious problem

Brett writes in his editorial "The new F word" (*CC* August 9) that he and his family belong to the 30 percent obese people in the States, to use his own words. I will not go into propagating any dietary program that is being offered left and right, because I do agree with Brett that going on a diet has meager results, and is, as a rule, of short duration.

So if a diet is not the answer, what can be done to stay healthy?

The answer is, A CHANGE OF LIFE STYLE – a life style that is in conformity with the will of God, because there is a religious side to what we eat. Brett does not pursue this element at all; rather, he aligns himself with the views of NAAFA. For God's people, the body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, which means we have to look after it as well as we can.

What does that mean in practical terms? We must not be ruled by the advertising campaigns of the food companies, because your health is not their priority – their priority is the bottom line.

So, no processed food of any kind, including breakfast food out of a box. Get off the processed-sugar wagon; it puts your system on overtime. Too much sugar requires too much insulin. As a result, your system is always correcting what you do wrong on a continual basis. Furthermore, no hydrogenated oil of any kind, or deep-fried food in hydrogenated oil. Stay away from fast-food places. Use them when you are traveling, or in emergencies, never on a regular basis. There is good fat and bad fat, and bad fat makes you fat and shortens your life.

What is a healthy food intake? One third of our intake should be raw. Hard to do? Not at all. You eat only fruit, all kinds, and juice at breakfast time. That way you get cleaned out every morning, from the inside. Eat fish two times a week and a small portion of meat two times a week – all this with a lot of vegetables and salads, without salad dressings, only unrefined, cold-pressed olive oil and other unrefined, cold-pressed oils.

Obesity is epidemic in North America, caused mainly by the faulty example of the parents. I sincerely believe that it is the responsibility of a parent to teach their children a healthy life style, instead of putting them on the road to an early demise.

Brett writes: "It is true of course, that obesity can raise health risks." Agreeing to this proven fact and, at the same time, trying to justify obesity does not make sense to me.

Finally, I do realize that there are people that have a medical condition that might cause obesity; however, that is a very small percentage. The vast majority of people who are obese have lost control in a certain department of their life, which operates at the same level as addiction to alcohol, drugs or smoking, and must be treated in the same manner.

William van Oene
St. Thomas, Ontario

More respect

Call me an old fogey, but I am disturbed by the familiarity that author Emily Wieringa uses in her news article "America First Lady puts family first" (*CC* September 13) as she refers to President Barack and Mrs. Michelle Obama. Numerous times the author refers to Mrs. Obama as **Michelle** and a few times to the President as **Barack** – first names only. I don't think it is appropriate that the author uses first names as though the Obamas were personal friends, or even close acquaintances. A little decorum would have been more appropriate.

I hope that CC issues an apology for this.

John Hofstee
Listowell, Ontario

We think that the story of America's First Lady expressing concern over the problem of childhood obesity and the picture showing Michelle Obama pumping her fist and shouting with a group of enthusiastic kids cries out for informality.

Editors

Reitsma Bick appointed CC editor

ST. CATHARINES, Ont. – The board of Reformed Faith Witness, which publishes the *Christian Courier*, announces the appointment of Angela Reitsma Bick as main editor of *CC*, effective October 1 this year. Reitsma Bick has done excellent work as co-editor since January 2009 alongside Brett Alan Dewing and Bert Witvoet. Her strong leadership has convinced the Board that it's time for a rearrangement of positions and responsibilities.

Reitsma Bick's appointment coincides with Bert Witvoet's decision to step down as co-editor. He will assume the role of contributing editor along with Cathy Smith and Peter Schuurman.

Reitsma Bick's professional experience before joining the *Christian Courier* includes Adjunct English Professor at Redeemer University College, Writing Centre Director at Redeemer, and student newspaper *Crown* editor 1999-2000. She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree (Honours English) from Redeemer University College and a Master of Arts degree from Queen's University.

Angela Reitsma Bick is married to Allan Bick. They live in Barrie, Ontario, with their two daughters Robin (5) and Alba (3).

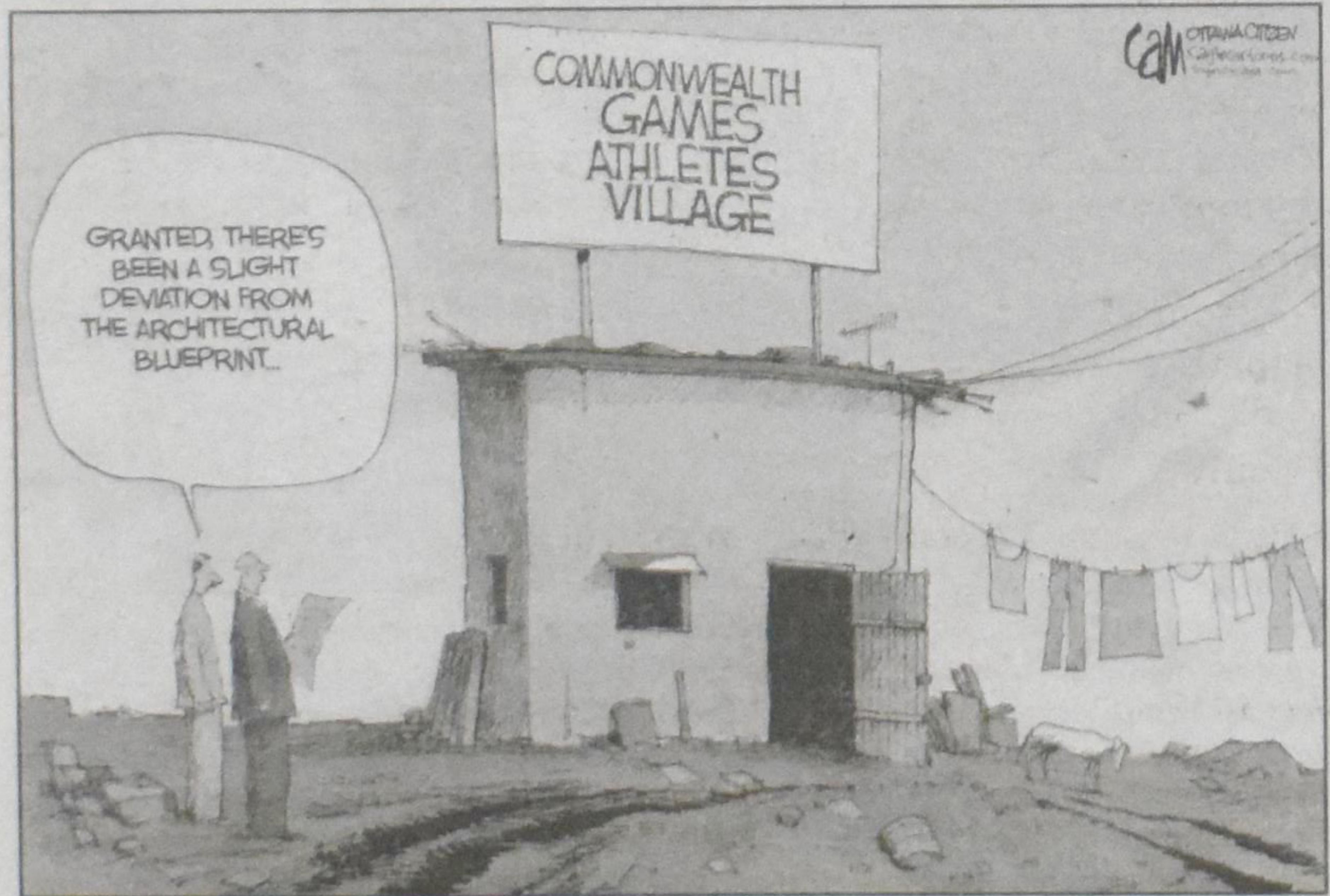
Fisher's faith *continued from p.3*

hopefuls in both Kingston, Ont. and his hometown of Peterborough, through Hockey Ministries International.

"Some kids come from no faith background, so I want to tell them about what God's done in my life and share the things he's helped me with," says the member of Ottawa's Bridge Church. Having looked up to Laurie Boschman, Stu Grimson and Mark Osborne growing up, Fisher knows what it's like to have a hockey hero. "It helps because, seeing Christian players as a kid, you realize you can still have faith in God and be a tough player." It would appear Fisher is succeeding, with the Sens having finished fifth in the 2010 Eastern Conference. Yet win or lose, Fisher is content shooting for goals that are out of this world.

"It's great having God to rely on, knowing he has a plan for us. We don't have to worry what's going to go on in our future or what's going to happen down the road. You just have to play your hardest, and if you're on God's team, that's the only team that's important."

Emily Wierenga (www.emilywierenga.com) is an author, artist and freelance writer who lives with her husband and son in Neerlandia, AB.



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News

Angola: Church struggles to combat witchcraft

CAXITO, Angola (Fides) – Popular belief in witchcraft is "a very serious problem" in Angola, reports Bishop Antonio Jaca of Caxito. Bishop Jaca told Fides news service that he attributes the influence of belief in witchcraft to "ignorance, illiteracy and a failure or evangelization." He reasons that "someone who believes in witchcraft is a person who has not been sufficiently evangelized, whose faith is not strong enough to make Christ the only answer in his life."

While serious evangelization efforts are being conducted by both Protestants and Roman Catholics, "it is not an easy task," says the bishop, "because we have seen that although the churches are full on Sundays . . . faith is not strong enough to combat threats such as the sects and the old beliefs like witchcraft."

The influence of witchcraft is also aggravated by "poverty, misery, the difficulties of life" in a country that was enslaved by Marxism for 20 years and that remains desperately needy eight years after the end of a long and costly civil war.

The Gospel is the antidote

Caxito has just under one million inhabitants, of which 400,000 are Catholic. There are different sects, mainly of Congolese origin, and some are Muslims, but most of the inhabitants are Christians, and primarily Roman Catholics. Christianity first came to Angola in 1491.

Bishop Jaca points out that witchcraft grips young and old alike; in fact, especially children and the elderly. "It is a problem that worries the Church, but the state is also beginning to take note of the danger posed by these beliefs," he says.

The antidote is the Gospel. "We try to form these people, telling them that evil exists, the devil is at work, but that Christ has overcome evil with the Resurrection. Thus, faith tells us that there is nothing more powerful than Jesus. So, there is no reason to believe in evil spirits that can make us evil, because faith is our greatest security against evil." But witchcraft is rooted in the popular culture in Angola. "We must work especially with the new generations to overcome these superstitions and increase their faith. Because the stronger their faith, the more they will be able to overcome these kinds of beliefs."

B.C. archbishop bans gambling as fundraising tool

EDMONTON (Catholic Culture) – Archbishop Richard Smith of Edmonton has directed all Catholic schools and institutions in the archdiocese to stop using "casino nights" and other gambling ventures for their fundraising campaigns.

The archbishop's order, which went into effect on October 1, does not apply to parish bingo games and similar local efforts, but to commercial gambling operations from which parishes and schools take a percentage of the proceeds.

The issue is a moral one, said the archbishop. But the order did not please some of the parishioners within Smith's archdiocese. Lori Nagy, a spokesperson for the Edmonton Catholic School Board, told the CBC that the board was "counting on" an additional $3 million raised through gambling revenues "to pay for important school programs. This funding is critical for our schools."

Nagy said the gambling revenue pays for field trips, technology in classrooms, and breakfast and lunch programs. The archbishop's order – which was communicated to school principals by letter – caught the Catholic school board by surprise, she said.

Nagy acknowledged that using gambling revenue to fund Catholic school programs "is not an ideal method of fundraising," but she felt that the expected quick implementation of the archbishop's order would be a problem. Calgary's archbishop issued a similar order three years ago but did not implement the policy until this year.

CRWRC urges: 'Feed the fish' for a good cause

BURLINGTON, Ont./GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (CRCNA) – Once again, the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC) is asking supporters to feed a fish to help combat world hunger.

Peter Fish, the "gold fish" asking your help this year, might remind people of the iconic fish from their childhood days or the days when their children were small. The little orange plastic fish banks are possibly the most memorable part of CRWRC's World Hunger Campaigns each year.

Churches distribute the banks each fall, children fill them with their coins, and the banks are collected so that the proceeds can help CRWRC fight global hunger around the world.

This year, hoping to expand his reach, Peter Fish is going virtual. CRWRC is launching a Facebook campaign to spread the word beyond the youngsters and have people feed the fish as much as possible.

By going online the goal is to maximize the number of dollars being committed to the fight against hunger. Peter Fish says participating is not hard. It's easier than actually getting in a boat or standing on a pier. There are two simple steps: Join the "Feed The Fish" cause on Facebook. Donate $10 to CRWRC's Feed The Fish campaign. (Donations from both Canada and the U.S. can be given through the Facebook cause page. However, if online donors wish to receive a charitable tax receipt from CRWRC they must donate at <www.crwrc.org/fish>.

CRWRC is hoping that people who donate will tell 10 friends about their donation and encourage those friends to join the cause. "Get others intrigued by posting your status on your Facebook profile," urges the agency. "For example: '<name> fed the fish, will you?' or '<name> didn't forget to feed the fish!'"

Small actions have big impact

For more than 30 years CRWRC has helped the Christian Reformed Church in North America call attention to global hunger and participate in a response. The campaign has usually occurred during the weeks leading up to World Hunger Sunday, which was designated by the CRC Synod in 1979 to be the first Sunday in November. That would mean distribution of the materials to congregations on Sunday, October 17, and a culmination in World Hunger Sunday on November 7. However, the materials are designed so that they can be used at any time of year.

This year's campaign reminds church members that "what we want and what we commit to do" are two different things. Today, around the world, there are people who have committed to improving farming techniques, teaching adult literacy, providing small loans to business people, and taking other steps to find long-term solutions to poverty.

The campaign includes everything local churches will need to hold a World Hunger Sunday service including: song suggestions, bulletin announcements, children's sermons, instructions for holding a "Show of Hands" activity and sermon suggestions. Also available are devotional booklets that offer three weeks of devotions and activity suggestions.

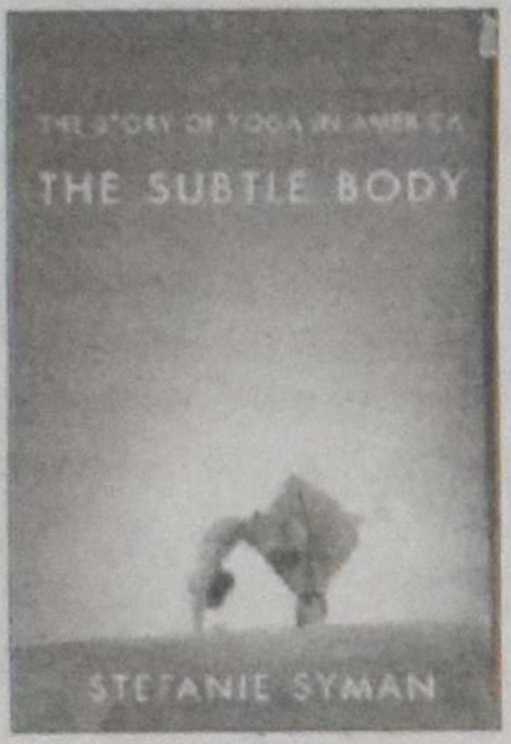
Initially a disaster response and adoption agency, CRWRC expanded its focus in 1979 to include international community development programs and it eventually merged a third emphasis, justice education, into its vision and mission. Today, CRWRC is a well-established, bi-national organization with a reputation for innovative and sustainable grass-roots development and relief work around the world. To "go fishing" online and help Pete fill the need, visit the Peter Fish page at CRWRC's website (<www.crwrc.org>).

News

Christians, Beware yoga

Marian Van Til

"Some questions we ask today would simply baffle our ancestors. When Christians ask whether believers should practice yoga, they are asking a question that betrays the strangeness of our current cultural moment – a time in which yoga seems almost mainstream in America. It was not always so…." That is how R. Albert Mohler, Jr. begins a recent commentary on his popular blog site.



Mohler critiqued a new book by Stefanie Syman called *The Subtle Body: The Story of Yoga in America.* He calls the book "a masterpiece of cultural history." He is calling attention to Syman's book precisely because yoga has become so mainstream. Its non-Hindu users in North America (which is almost everybody who uses yoga on this continent) either ignore or are ignorant of its spiritual foundation and the worldview behind it. "It's just exercise," they say.

But Syman – and Mohler – point out that such nonchalance and/or ignorance needs to be resisted. That's hard because yoga seems so innocent, and even helpful. In Syman's words, it has become "sanitized, sanctioned and family friendly."

Healthy family fun?

A particularly blatant illustration of that opens her book. She describes this past year's annual Easter Egg Roll on the lawn of the White House in Washington. First Lady Michelle Obama told her selected audience of children, "Our goal today is just to have fun. We want to focus on activity, healthy eating. We've got yoga, we've got dancing, we've got storytelling, we've got Easter-egg decorating." Syman notes "the rather amazing fact that a practice once seen as so exotic and even dangerous was now included as an activity sufficiently safe and mainstream for children."

Yoga was never intended to be "just exercise" and "family fun." Hyman notes. It was (is) meant to be a spiritual discipline, what she calls a "technique for God realization" that "had at various times enjoined its adherents to reduce their diet to rice, milk, and a few vegetables, fix their minds on a set of, to us, incomprehensible syllables, and self-administer daily enemas (without the benefit of equipment), to name just a few of its prerequisites, into an activity suitable for children. Though yoga has no coherent tradition in India, being preserved instead by thousands of gurus and hundreds of lineages, each of which makes a unique claim to authenticity, we had managed to turn it into a singular thing: a way to stay healthy and relaxed."

Later on in the book Hyman candidly explains "the role of sexual energy in virtually all forms of yoga and of ritualized sex in some yoga traditions" – which in itself should raise red flags when recommending yoga for children.

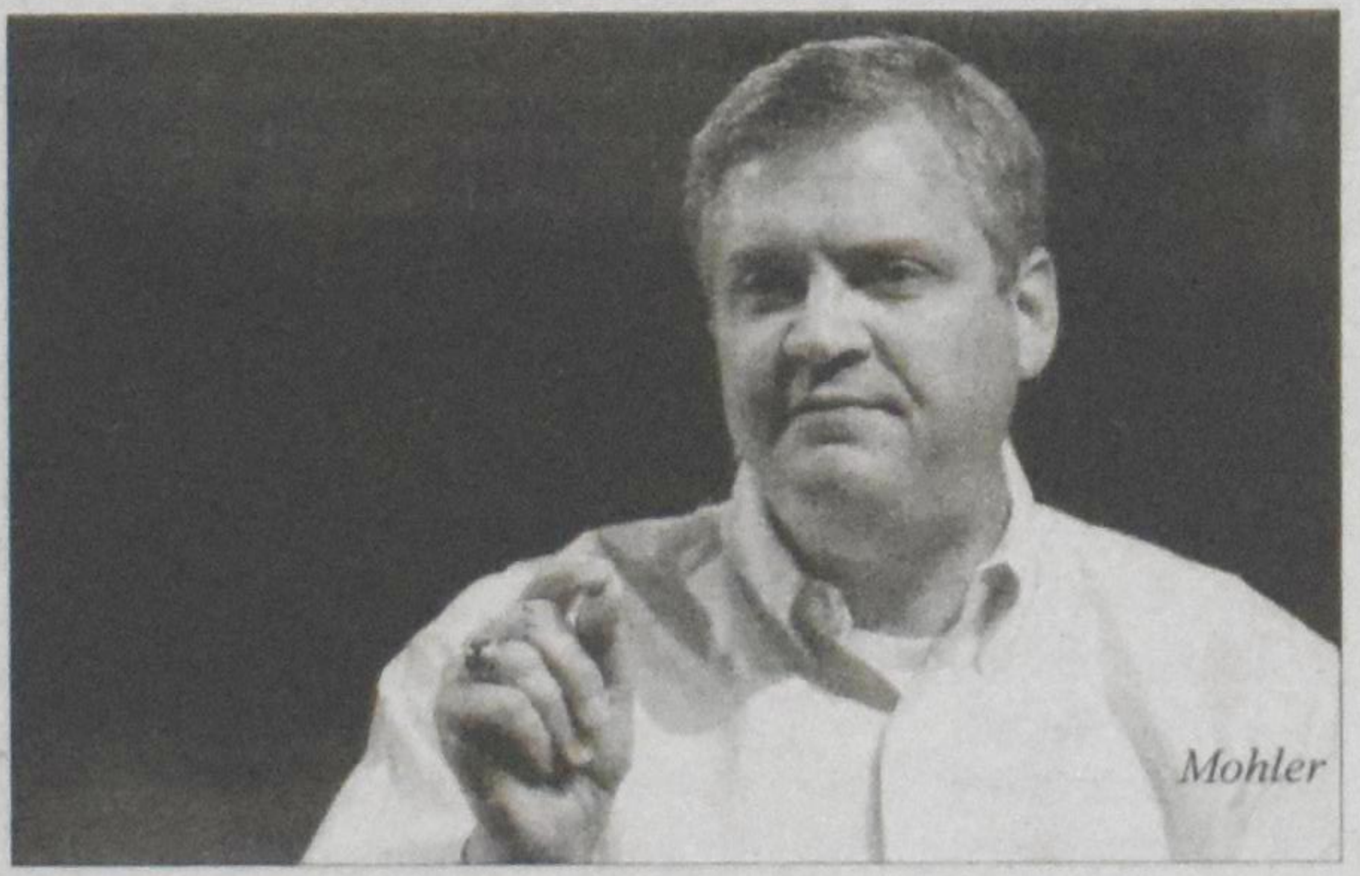
Ties to Transcendentalism, New Age

Syman documents the ties between yoga and groups or movements such as the Transcendentalists and New Thought, Mohler explains, "movements that sought to provide a spirituality that would be a clear alternative to biblical Christianity." Syman names influential figures such as Swami Vivekananda, Swami Prabhavananda, Pierre Bernard and Margaret Woodrow Wilson. "Each of these figures played a role in the growing acceptance of yoga in America, but most were controversial at the time – some extremely so," Mohler says.

The physical *is* the spiritual

Mohler's own negative critique of yoga is based on its anti-biblical understanding of the human body and the world in general. He says, "To a remarkable degree, the growing acceptance of yoga points to the retreat of biblical Christianity in the culture. Yoga begins and ends with an understanding of the body that is, to say the very least, at odds with the Christian understanding. Christians are not called to empty the mind or to see the human body as a means of connecting to and coming to know the divine. Believers are called to meditate upon the Word of God – an external Word that comes to us by divine revelation – not to meditate by means of incomprehensible syllables."

Despite that, many Christians do practice yoga. "Most seem unaware that yoga cannot be neatly separated into physical and spiritual dimensions. The physical is the spiritual in yoga, and the exercises and disciplines of yoga are meant to connect with the divine," says Mohler.


Mohler

He insists, "When Christians practice yoga, they must either deny the reality of what yoga represents or fail to see the contradictions between their Christian commitments and their embrace of yoga. The contradictions are not few, nor are they peripheral." It is a "bare fact," he says, "that yoga is a spiritual discipline by which the adherent is trained to use the body as a vehicle for achieving consciousness of the divine."

Symptom of postmodern confusion

In stark contrast, Christians' calling, in Mohler's words, is "to look to Christ for all that we need and to obey Christ through obeying his Word. We are not called to escape the consciousness of this world by achieving an elevated state of consciousness, but to follow Christ in the way of faithfulness."

Naturally Mohler admits that exercise can be beneficial. But he reiterates, along with Syman, that yoga is not just exercise. "The embrace of yoga is a symptom of our postmodern spiritual confusion, and, to our shame, this confusion reaches into the church," he says.

Stefanie Syman

Mohler concludes, "Stefanie Syman is telling us something important when she writes that yoga 'has augured a truly post-Christian, spiritually polyglot country.' Christians who practice yoga are embracing, or at minimum flirting with, a spiritual practice that threatens to transform their own spiritual lives into a 'post-Christian, spiritually polyglot' reality. Should any Christian willingly risk that?"

Florida:

Muslim hacks website of 'apostate' defenders

ORLANDO, Florida (CCI) – An American lawyer who successfully defended Rifqa Bary, a teenage Christian convert from Islam, has had his organization's website destroyed by a Muslim hacker. The lawyer, John Stemberger, is also facing a $10 million lawsuit filed by the lawyer who represented Miss Bary's Muslim parents.

Stemberger represented Rifqa Bary, who hit the headlines last year when she told U.S. media that she would not be safe with her Muslim parents and feared an "honour killing." Her father has denied the allegations.

Stemberger's pro-family organization, the Florida Family Policy Council (FFPC), says that a Muslim hacker had managed to access their website last month and disable parts of it, interfering with the inner workings of the site. The hacker left an "obscene message on the events page explaining in broken English who he was and why he was hacking the site," says Stemberger. The message included references to the organization's views on "the Great Islam."

Stemberger is also being sued by the lawyer of Rifqa Bary's parents over allegations of "emotional distress" and "damage to reputation." Stemberger says the lawsuit is a "frivolous publicity stunt." He noted that the same lawyer has "filed multiple grievances against me with the Florida Bar, trying to have me disbarred or disciplined as an attorney."

High-profile apostate

When Rifqa Bary's case was transferred from Florida to Ohio, where her parents were living, another lawyer took up the case. But Stemberger appeared on Fox News to discuss the case and also talked about honour killings. Part of the lawsuit is also against a blogger who made claims about the Bary's lawyer.

In April this year it emerged that Rifqa Bary faced deportation from the U.S. but in August she turned 18 and has now been granted permanent legal residency in the U.S. That ensures, says the FFPC that "she will never have to fear being sent back to her native Sri Lanka where she could easily be killed as one of the highest profile and most recognizable Islamic apostates in the world." On a practical level, it will also allow her to get a Social Security number, apply to colleges and apply for a driver's license. Rifqa Bary, who has been suffering from uterine cancer, will also be able to get health care coverage.

Rifqa Bary

John Stemberger concludes, "Rifqa represents a symbol of hope for hundreds of thousands of young Muslims who disagree with Islam and want to leave their faith, but fear the implications of doing so. It was a real challenge but a great privilege to defend this amazing young lady who now desires to 'preach the Gospel to the nations.'"

Columns

Technically Speaking
Derek Schuurman

Technology and Sabbath

This fall I have been blessed with the privilege of taking a sabbatical for four months. The term sabbatical has its roots in the word "Sabbath," and, like the Sabbath day, which occurs one day in seven, a sabbatical is normally granted once every seven years. Already in Leviticus the Israelites were commanded to give the fields a rest every seven years, and academic sabbaticals reflect these biblical roots.

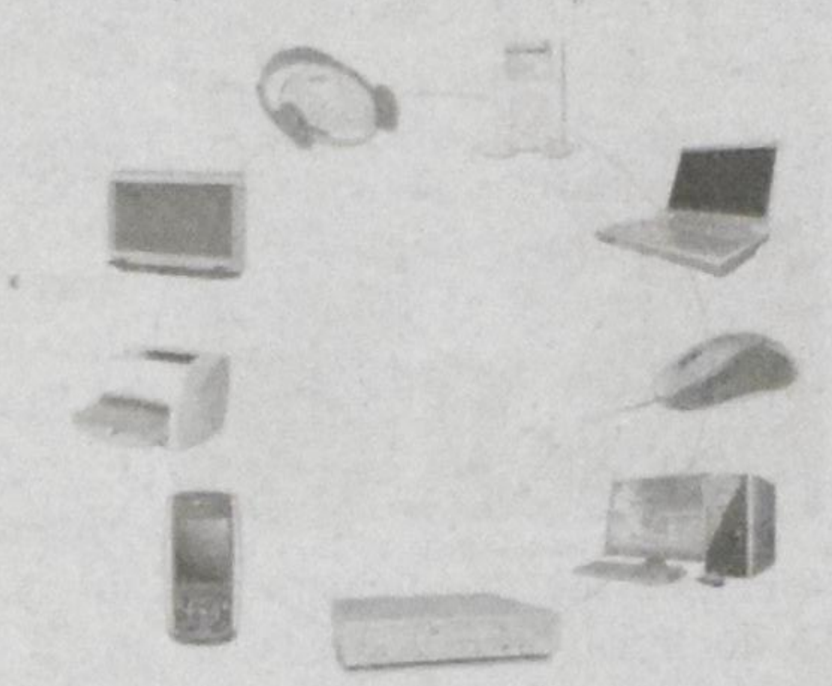
But sabbaticals are not always times of rest; in most academic circles professors are expected to be working on ambitious research projects. At my institution sabbatical offerings are limited, so receiving a sabbatical is a competitive process among the eligible professors. In a sense, I earned the right to a sabbatical "rest" by outbidding others in terms of how much work I plan to accomplish. Nevertheless, it is refreshing to have a "Sabbath" from my normal obligations and take time to reflect and focus on a single project.

The term "Sabbath" is one that has many connotations. For some older folks, it may harken back to a time when Sabbath legalism was rampant in many Reformed circles. Not unlike the pharisees, numerous rules were made about what one could and could not do on the Sabbath. For some, activities such as biking and swimming were forbidden, and not attending church twice on Sundays would mean a visit from the elder. The movie "Chariots of Fire" told the story of Eric Liddel, a gifted runner who refused to run an Olympic race on the Sabbath despite pressure from the Prince of Wales.

Unbridled Sundays

In some Reformed circles the pendulum has now swung completely the other way. The "freedom in Christ" is now emphasized and all seemingly anachronistic views of Sunday observance have been jettisoned. The distinction of "necessary work" on Sunday has diminished, and working on Sunday has gradually become more acceptable. Sunday shopping, once considered taboo because it made others work, is more common. I have visited Reformed churches and observed people strolling into church with a Tim Hortons coffee in their hand. Almost any activity is now permitted, and we often fill our Sundays full with them. In many places attendance at the traditional second worship service has declined, or it has been abandoned altogether.

Have we become more enlightened, or more accommodating to the general trends in our wider society? The "Lord's Day Act" was scrapped in the mid 1980s and the notion of a "common pause day" has disappeared. While we have rightly abandoned many Sabbath legalisms, as a community we may have lost something more as well. I think technology has also contributed to a culture that rejects Sabbath rest. Our electronic devices keep us tethered to work and entertainment, and demand our constant attention. In the words of Marshall McLuhan: "We shape our tools, and, thereafter, our tools shape us" – and our modern tools never rest. As we become shaped by our always-on technology, we lose the ability to rest and reflect.



Sabbath commandment

Keeping the Sabbath day is explicitly part of the Ten Commandments, and the commandment to cease work is clearly for all: children, servants, strangers, and even animals. The two passages that recount the Ten Commandments actually provide two different reasons to keep the Sabbath. In Exodus 20, the Sabbath is associated with God resting on the seventh day in creation. In Deuteronomy 5, we are told that the Sabbath is to remember that God rescued his people from slavery. The reasons cited in these passages are positive ones associated with rest and reflection, something that we lose when we fill our Sundays with work and unrelenting electronic distractions.

The notion of "Sabbath" is intensely counter-cultural, yet I believe it is firmly embedded in the fabric of creation. Ignoring the Sabbath commandment will likely have consequences. Although we should avoid arbitrary legalism, thoughtful guidelines can be helpful in safeguarding our Sabbath rest. In our family we have chosen to try and make our Sundays "computer free." At Redeemer University College there is a Sabbath policy that addresses Sunday travel and the scheduling of examinations to help avoid studying on Sunday. Even in the secular world, people are recognizing the creational need for a Sabbath. The website *www.offlininginc.com* encourages people to disconnect from the Internet and have a "secular Sabbath" by having a device-free day from sundown to sundown. The *New York Times* recently encouraged people to an "unplugged challenge" where they would give up technology for a time and share their experiences.

This fall I am grateful for a sabbatical. Although I have some ambitious writing plans, I intend to take some time for rest and reflection. And I plan to take each of my Sundays off, to try to turn off my computer, and to take time to gather in worship with other believers each Sunday – perhaps even twice.

Derek Schuurman (dschuur@csredeemer.ca) is a professor at Redeemer University College who was granted a sabbatical for this fall. He hopes to make progress on a writing project, but also to take some time for Sabbath rest.

The kids are alright

I grew up in the '80s and I knew three things to be true.

One: skinny leather ties were the coolest fashion accessories ever created.

Two: my generation was unique, special and destined for greatness.

Three: adults would never, ever, understand kids.

It turns out I was only right about the last one.

Now I know what you're thinking: adults must know what it's like to be young, because they were young once themselves. That's not true, and I can prove it.

If I asked you to describe Star Wars today, you'd give me a plot summary. You might even explain how it fits into the other five movies that have come since. If I asked you to describe Star Wars in 1977, you would have said: "It was AWESOME" and babbled on about droids and light sabers and cinnamon-bun-hairdos with a goofy grin on your face. That's the difference between youth and adulthood.

Older people put their lives in context. Young people don't know what happens next.

Older people judge their younger selves. Young people aren't there yet.

Older people have forgotten how to take risks. Young people thrive on them.

It has ever been thus.

A very wise man once put it this way: "I see no hope for the future of our people if they are dependent on the frivolous youth of today, for certainly all youth are reckless beyond words. When I was a boy, we were taught to be discrete and respectful of elders, but the present youth are exceedingly wise and impatient of restraint." That very wise man was Hesiod, the father of Greek poetry. He wrote those words 700 years before the birth of Christ. Not much has changed.

Useless oversight

Some time ago I was speaking to a group of fellow Christian parents about our kids' activities online. A few parents expressed concern about their teenagers surfing for porn, or learning about drug paraphernalia, or bullying other kids online or being bullied themselves. One parent offered up the following solution: "I pay the bills. So I own the Internet in my house. If I want to go through my kids' emails, check their chat logs, install spy-ware and key-catchers on their computers, and force them to turn over their browser history to me, that's what I do. It's my house. My rules."

So I asked the following question: "If your parents had listened in on your phone conversations or opened your mail, what would you have done?" The parent thought about it for a second and said: "I would have used a payphone and sent my mail to a friend's house." I said: "That's what your kids are going to do. They're going to use someone else's computer or email account. They'll use the browser on their smart phone. They'll go around you. And they'll always be one step ahead of you because you are old and slow, and they are young and fast. In fact, I guarantee they've already done it."

The parent had forgotten what it was like to be young. To be young is to circumvent and subvert the rules.

Parental role

But the parent was also doing a parent's job – which is to safeguard their child, protect them from danger, and try to instill a sense of morality in the child. Of course, that's a good thing. But there's a wrong way to go about it. My generation of parents tends to fall into one of two traps: they either think today's youth are exactly like kids of generations past, except with cooler toys – or – they assume everything has changed since they were kids and their children are living in a unique time. These are fast-moving times, no doubt. A recent study suggests there's not only a generation gap between adults and children, but among kids themselves. Kids born just four years apart are growing up in completely different cultural worlds. Technology and culture changes so fast, a Grade 9 student has almost as little in common with a Grade 12 student as with his own parents. In other words, we are all caught up in a whirlwind of change – parents and kids alike.

But these times are also not so unique as we might think. Children still need parents to help them navigate through life's tough decisions and moral dilemmas. They still need parents to be role models and spiritual advisors. That has not changed – and never will.

But what does not work in 2010 is a rules-oriented rigidity about access to technology and information. Rather than blocking websites and hovering over them while they surf, we need to instill in our children the values that guide their hands, so that every point and click is guided not by fear, but by love. They need to know how to be responsible. That's what we can give them.

If we can do that, we'll find out that there is another great truth, spoken by that great sage, Pete Townshend, many decades ago: "The kids are alright."

Lloyd Rang (Lloyd.rang@rogers.com) is a member of Rehoboth CRC in Bowmanville, Ontario.

Column/News

THE PUBLIC SQUARE
Harry Antonides

Why the Ground-Zero mosque should not be built

It is indisputable that as Muslim immigrants we, as a whole, have failed to put ourselves in the shoes of the host people.... The mosque at Ground Zero, if constructed, will become a permanent liability for Americans – and for American Muslim even more. (Hasan Mahmud, frontpagemag.com, September 10, 2010)

Harry Antonides

At the time of this writing the debate about the now world-famous planned Cordoba mosque (renamed 51 Park Place) near Ground Zero, two blocks away, is raging furiously. On the one side are the supporters of imam Feisal Abdul Rauf, who is the mastermind behind the plan to build a $100 million mosque and Islamic centre near the spot where nearly 3000 people were murdered on 9/11.

Imam Rauf presents himself as a moderate who wants to build bridges to non-Muslims, and he reasons that building this mosque would serve as proof of the good faith of Muslims. A large majority of Americans were not persuaded, although some spoke out in favour.

New York mayor Michael Bloomberg supported this project because he saw it as a Muslim effort to reach out to the broader non-Muslim community. He hoped that this would help bring the city closer together "and help repudiate the false and repugnant idea that the attacks of 9/11 were in any way consistent with Islam."

The mainstream press was unified in insisting that this issue is all about freedom of religion and tolerance, and it denounced the critics as racists and hate-mongers. The religious left joined the chorus of condemnation, including Jim Wallis, editor of *Sojourners*, who wrote "Refracting America through 9/11 lens." He accused the critics of lying and stoking "fear and hatred." (*Politico*, August 25, 2010)

Sending the wrong message

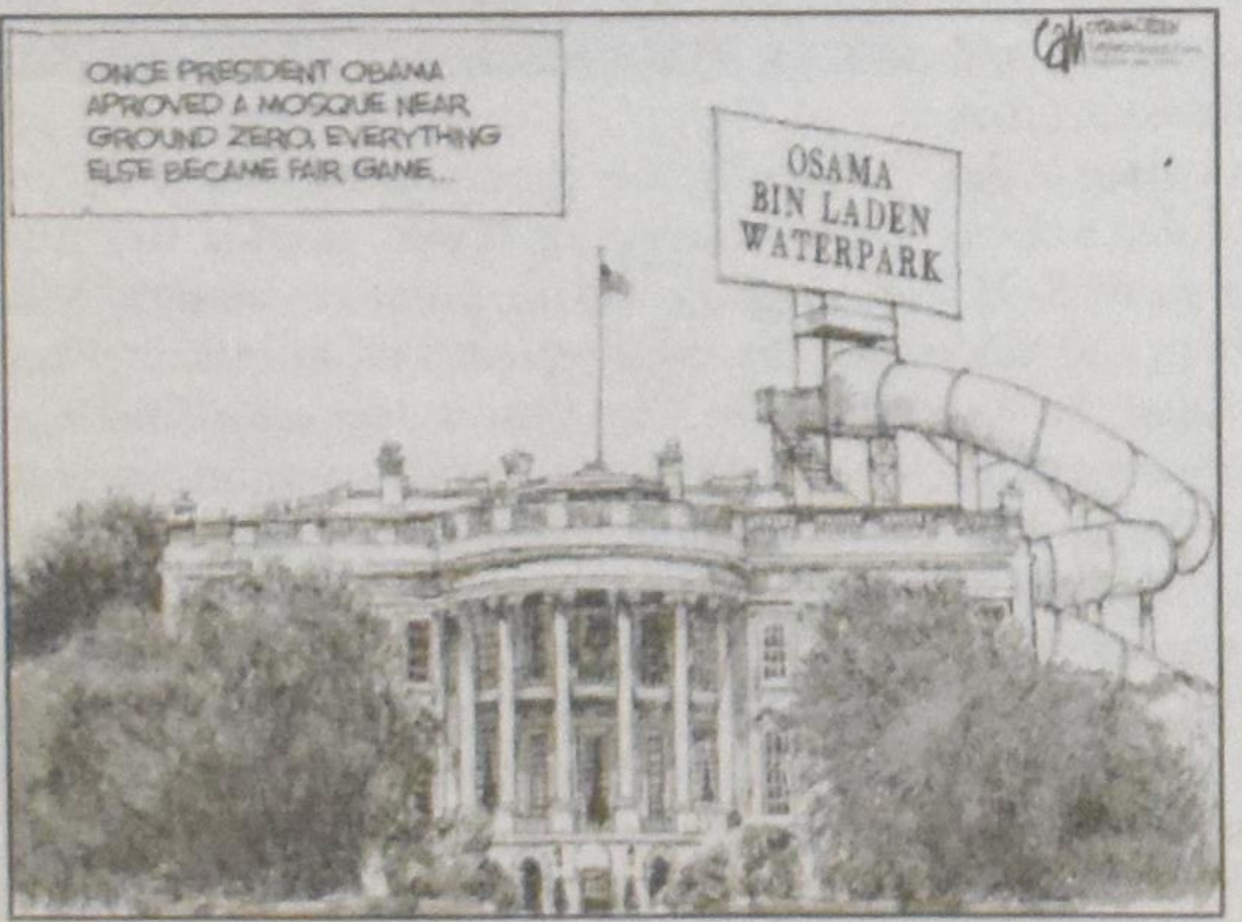
Rauf warned that if he would concede and not build the mosque at that location, it would send a message to the Muslim world that America is becoming anti-Muslim and violates its own constitution.

He wrote in an Op-Ed piece in the *New York Times* (September 10) that the support of President Obama and Mayor Michael Bloomberg for the mosque project had made a "tremendous impact" on the Muslim street and its leadership. He called this a "wonderful outpouring of support" and a "milestone in improving American-Muslim relations."

Rauf predicted that this improvement would make it harder for anti-American radicals to recruit young, impressionable Muslims for their cause. On the other hand, he warned that if the protesters win, the radicals will have another tool to recruit more terrorists, endangering national security and the security of Americans worldwide. He continued:

This is why Americans must not back away from completion of this project. If we do, we cede the discourse, and essentially, our future to radicals on both sides. The paradigm of a clash between the West and the Muslim world will continue, as it has in recent decades at terrible cost. It is a paradigm we must shift.

Rauf apparently has no regard for the opinions of 70 percent of Americans who oppose this building project. They have at least two compelling reasons. One is out of respect for those who died a gruesome death on 9/11. Perhaps the most compelling objection is that mosques are places where many radicals, including the 9/11 perpetrators, are indoctrinated into the violent strain of Islam. It is safe to assume that all radical Islamists would view a Ground Zero mosque as a symbol of Islamic supremacy and triumphalism. Westerners have no idea how powerful such symbolism is in Islam.



Confusing talk

Rauf is blind and deaf to the reasons for not going ahead with the building of this mosque at this time and this place. He rudely dismisses the strong feelings of most Americans as bigotry and intolerance. His calculated language, intended to indicate that he himself does not favour terrorism, still gets this veiled threat across: "If you do not allow us to go ahead with this project, Muslims will have just reasons to step up terrorist attacks on America."

What kind of threat is that? What are we missing in this most open and tolerant country where the authorities have gone out of their way to accommodate the demands of Muslim leaders, where billions of dollars have been spent in preventing future attacks, and where many terrorist plots have been uncovered? The list goes on.

In my view what is missing in Rauf's views is context. The context here is the clash of civilizations that is poorly understood in the tolerant, now largely secular West. Many among the media, academic, and political elite do not take seriously the reality that all over the Muslim world, and now in many mosques in the West, radical imams spout an unrelenting message of hatred toward the infidels, especially the Great Satan. They ignore the impact of such preaching, as described in the *Freedom House Report* of 2005:

Wahhabi and Islamist extremism today is the soil in which al Qaeda and its sister terrorist organizations are growing. We need to recognize the problem posed by the international spread of this Saudi Arabia sponsored [Wahhabi] hate ideology, including within the American homeland.

Unravelling Orwellian doublespeak

How does a man like Rauf, a cleric born in Kuwait who has lived in the U.S. since his teens, fit into that picture? He has denounced terrorism and claims that Islam's core teachings are in keeping with American democracy. President Obama has appointed him to be an ambassador of goodwill to the Muslim world.

Judging his handling of the planned mosque, he has not performed well. But there is more. He has claimed that America "has more Muslim blood on its hands than al Qaeda," and "American policies were an accessory to the crime that happened." He also said that "Osama bin Laden is made in the U.S." He refused to acknowledge that Hamas is a terrorist organization, explaining that terrorism is a "very complex" issue. (On CNN, September 8, 2010, he admitted that "Hamas has committed acts of terrorism.")

Space does not allow me to expand on other statements, such as his praise of the 1979 Iranian revolution and his advice to President Obama that the U.S. should respect what amounts to a tyrannical theocracy in that country.

Those are not the words of a bridge builder and man of peace despite the *New York Times'* claim that Rauf has spent a life time trying to "reconcile Islam with America and modernism."

If Rauf would ask me for advice, I would give him this simple message: Quit confusing the people with your Orwellian doublespeak; begin appreciating the freedom and openness of America; then advocate in the Muslim world that they should replicate the freedom that all Muslims enjoy in the West.

I won't hold my breath.

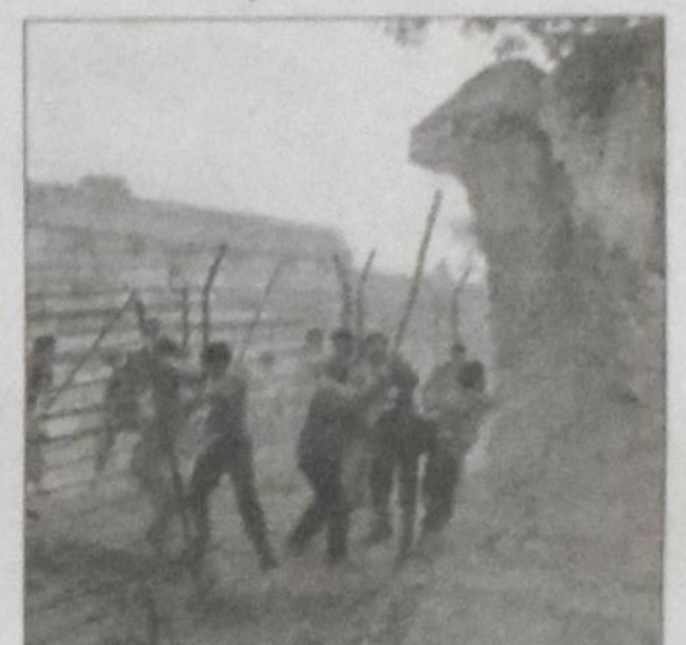
Harry Antonides (hantonides@sympatico.ca) *lives in Willowdale, Ontario.*

Christians call for calm after Indian verdict on holy site

Anto Akkara

BANGALORE, India (ENI) – Churches in India have joined other faiths and political leaders in calling for calm after a court ruled that a religious site, vigorously and violently disputed by Hindus and Muslims, should be split between the two groups. On September 30, the high court of northern Uttar Pradesh state handed down its verdict in the protracted case that concerns the ownership of the site of the former Babri mosque at Ayodhya, 700 kilometres south-east of New Delhi. The case has been pending for more than half a century.

In a majority verdict, two of the three judges declared that Hindus have the right of ownership to the main disputed area, where the main dome of the Muslim Babri mosque once stood. The court granted Muslims and a Hindu group control of other parts of the site. Hindus consider the location the birthplace of the god Ram, and placed a Ram idol inside the mosque in 1949.



In 1992, Hindu extremists destroyed the mosque, built by the Mughal Empire ruler Babar in 1528. In the Hindu-Muslim violence that followed, more than 2000 people died.

Ahead of the court verdict, which some legal experts say is a victory for Hindu groups, the National Council of Churches in India, which groups Orthodox and Protestant churches, called for calm. "The NCCI calls upon everyone to maintain peace and harmony," the council said in a press release.

After the verdict, Christopher Rajkumar, executive secretary of the NCCI's justice and peace commission, said that "We do not want to go into the merits of the judgment at this moment. We have to study it carefully. We want peace and harmony in the country."

Archbishop Albert D'Souza of Agra, secretary general of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India, echoed these sentiments, and appealed for peace.

In addition, Hindu groups and leaders of various political parties have appealed for "peace and calm," against a background of general concern marked, as a result of the verdict, by traffic disappearing off roads and businesses shutting down in many cities.

"The worst has been averted," noted D'Souza, referring to the three-way split of the 2.6 acre disputed land that the court ordered. The site is currently under the control of the federal government. Still, D'Souza said that he would have been happier if those who pulled down the Babri mosque in 1992 had been punished, or at least reprimanded, when the court gave its verdict.

Some Hindu groups that see the verdict as a victory for themselves have urged Muslims to accept it and allow the building of a Ram temple on the disputed site, "in the national interest." The Muslim litigants, however, have said they will appeal the verdict in the federal Supreme Court.

Features

Gems of generosity

Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

Years ago, when my son Benjamin was four years old, he dug up clover with a shovel in our backyard. When I asked him what he was up to, he replied, "I'm doing good work." Revealing a generous spirit, he explained, "I'm taking away the clover so the bees go away and don't sting Jason's foot again." A few days before, Benjamin had witnessed his older brother's tears because his foot throbbed from a bee's sting.

At this time when we count our blessings and give thanks to God, we should be asking, where do children learn to be generous? How do they discover the value of working hard for others' sakes?

According to Dave Toycen, author of *The Power of Generosity: How to Transform Yourself and Your World*, two main sources mold children into generous people. First and foremost is God, who "has created everyone with the potential to be generous" (HarperCollins Publishers, 2004, pp. xv). The second source is parents. Toycen writes, "Generosity, when regularly practiced, produces a kind of emotional DNA that can be passed on to our children. Our practice becomes a model for them" (Ibid., pp. 57).

As Christian parents, we acknowledge our generous, noble God as the King of our lives. Therefore, it's fitting that the original meaning of *generous* is "to be of noble birth" As children of the King, we are called to reflect him in all that we do. Because of his generosity to us, we have the privilege of reflecting his nobility by being generous to others. One of the places we are called to practice generosity is in our homes as role models for our children.

A broader concept

What gems of generosity – treasures to last a lifetime – can we present to our kids? How can we be generous to them so they learn to be generous to others?

When answering these questions, we need to be aware that we often erroneously limit the concept of generosity. One way we do this is by exclusively defining it as giving away money or material things. Of course, we want to share our wealth with our children and with others. That's a good thing to do. In fact, Paul's biblical imperative to Timothy leaves no doubt about the course we must take: "Command those who are rich in this present world . . . to be generous and willing to share" (1 Timothy 6:17a, 18).

Another way that we limit the concept of generosity is to think of it only in terms of sharing our time with others. Again, this is important. Without donated time, many worthwhile projects would grind to a halt. However, generosity entails so much more than liberally sharing money and time.

No shame

Keeping that broader concept of generosity in mind, let me share three gems of generosity that you can give to your kids.

First, be generous by preserving your children's dignity when they make mistakes, no matter how large or small, no matter if they are made on purpose or inadvertently. Kids often blunder and encounter accidents as they navigate the road to adulthood.

Allow me to share two stories about adults who were generous to their children in this manner and had an incredible impact on their lives because of it.

In *The Power of Generosity*, Toycen relates how, at the age of seven, he ran away from home because he was angry with his mother. He soon realized that he had made a silly blunder and returned home. As he entered the kitchen where his mother was working, he tried to appear nonchalant. She didn't shame him by telling him how stupid he'd been and that she knew all along he would return home. Instead, Toycen writes, "With a true generosity of spirit, she didn't pursue it any further. I escaped with my dignity, yet was thoroughly self-chastised about the foolishness of my action. . . . That small gesture of generosity from my mother has stimulated more growth than I ever imagined" (Ibid., pp. 56).

I witnessed the healing impact of such actions at the 45th anniversary of my parents-in-law when my brother-in-law, Jace, addressed his parents and their guests. He recalled the death of a sibling which had occurred decades earlier. His younger brother had challenged him to race across a busy street. Jace took up the dare. His brother was struck by a vehicle and killed, while Jace was slightly injured. Jace expressed his deep gratitude to his parents for the fact that they had never blamed him – the older brother who should have been more responsible – for his foolishness which had led to one of the greatest losses of their lives.

When you preserve the dignity of your children as Toycen's mother and my parents-in-law did, they'll see reflected in your actions the generous nature of God, and be able to say with David, "He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand. He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God" (Psalm 40:2-3a). Also, you'll teach your kids to be generous to people who may cause them grief in big or small ways.

Trust to suffer

Next, be generous to your children by refusing to shield them from suffering and trying to solve all their problems for them. At first glance, this may seem harsh and ungenerous. Don't loving parents protect their children at all costs? Not at all. Overly protective, fix-it parents try to perform a herculean task which is doomed for failure and will have lasting negative consequences.

About the adverse results, Lewis B. Smedes writes in *Shame and Grace: Healing the Shame We Don't Deserve*, "A wise woman once told me that I did not trust my children. I asked her to explain. 'You don't trust them to suffer,' she said. She was right. I have done some suffering and survived, but I do not trust my kids to cope with their own suffering. So if God does not prevent them from suffering, I feel that it is my job to do it. And when I cannot fix it, my joy leaves by the back door of my spirit," (HarperSanFrancisco\Zondervan Publishing House, 1993, pp. 163).

Diminished parental joy and lack of trust in our children's ability to cope with suffering are just two consequences of this mind set. There are others, as well.

When we try to protect our children from suffering, we keep them from developing the muscles that they'll need to carry their particular load in life. Muscles are strengthened through use, not through lack of exposure to stress.

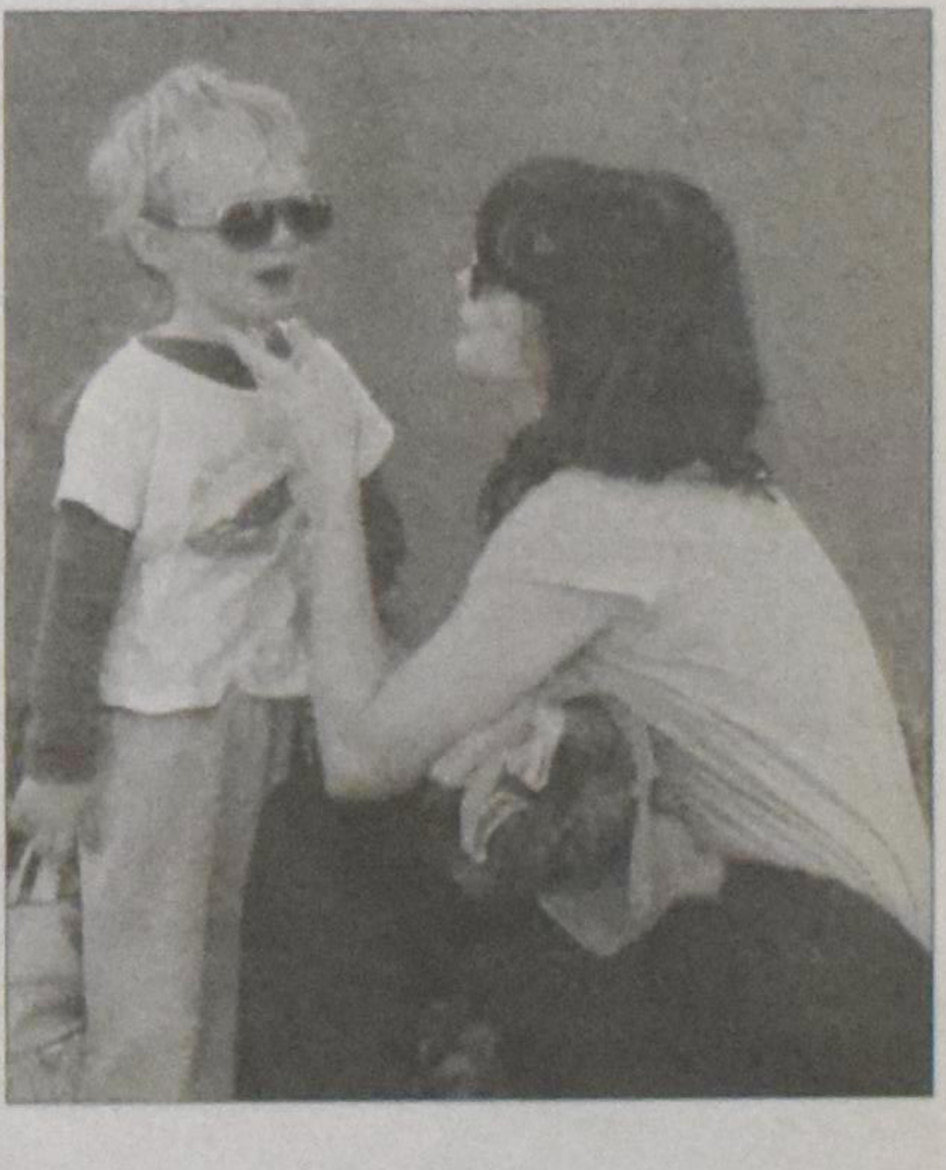
In her novel, *The Heretic's Daughter*, Kathleen Kent poignantly portrays this truth. In 1692 when Sarah is released from a Salem prison after being accused of witchcraft, her father is there to meet her. But though she is weak, her father doesn't run up the prison stairs to carry her home. He allows her to walk through the antagonistic crowd until she comes to him and he leads her home.

In Sarah's voice, Kent writes, "I understood at that moment fully and suddenly why he would not carry me, and why he had not come to my defense in times past when I was battling for my place in the world. It was not because he failed to love me, but because he loved me so well. He had brought us food and clothing and kind words when we were imprisoned; he did not abandon us. But he would never seek to weaken me so that I could not withstand the burdens and cruelties or harsh judgments of the world. An infant must learn to walk only by cutting his lip on the harsh ground. Only by tasting blood is the toddler discouraged from falling" (Little, Brown and Company, 2008, pp. 321-322).

The ground feels harsh when our children fall on it. However, if we don't allow them to tumble and feel the subsequent pain, the world will be for them a harsh place, indeed, when we are not around to rescue them from falls with greater, devastating consequences.

There's another reason, more important than all the others, for refusing to safeguard our kids from suffering. If we do shield them, we'll keep them from seeing what Quaker theologian Sandra Cronk calls "God working in the world with the power of powerlessness" (*Amish Grace: How Forgiveness Transcended Tragedy*, by Donald B. Kraybill, Steven M. Nolt, and David L. Weaver-Zercher, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2007, pp. 100). Suffering makes us feel weak and impotent. It's often then that we turn to God most authentically, our self-reliance and independence stripped away. He uses times like that to shape us into the people he wants us to be. The apostle Paul clearly spells out the process: ". . . we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope" (Romans 5:3b-4). The same process will take place in our children's lives when we allow them to navigate their own suffering. We then make room for the Holy Spirit to shape them into noble, compassionate and suffering servants of Christ, equipped to minister for their King in a world rife with suffering, and to work generously for the sake of others.

Fighting a great battle



Finally, be generous to your children by encouraging them. We all run out of *courage* at one point or another, and then dis*courage*ment sets in. Arthur Paul Boers, in *The Way is Made By Walking*, quotes Philo of Alexandria, an ancient Jewish philosopher, who reminds us that "everyone you meet is fighting a great battle" (InterVarsity Press, 2007, pp. 116). Our children will fight their own "great battles" at every stage of their lives. The en*courage*ment we give them will help them

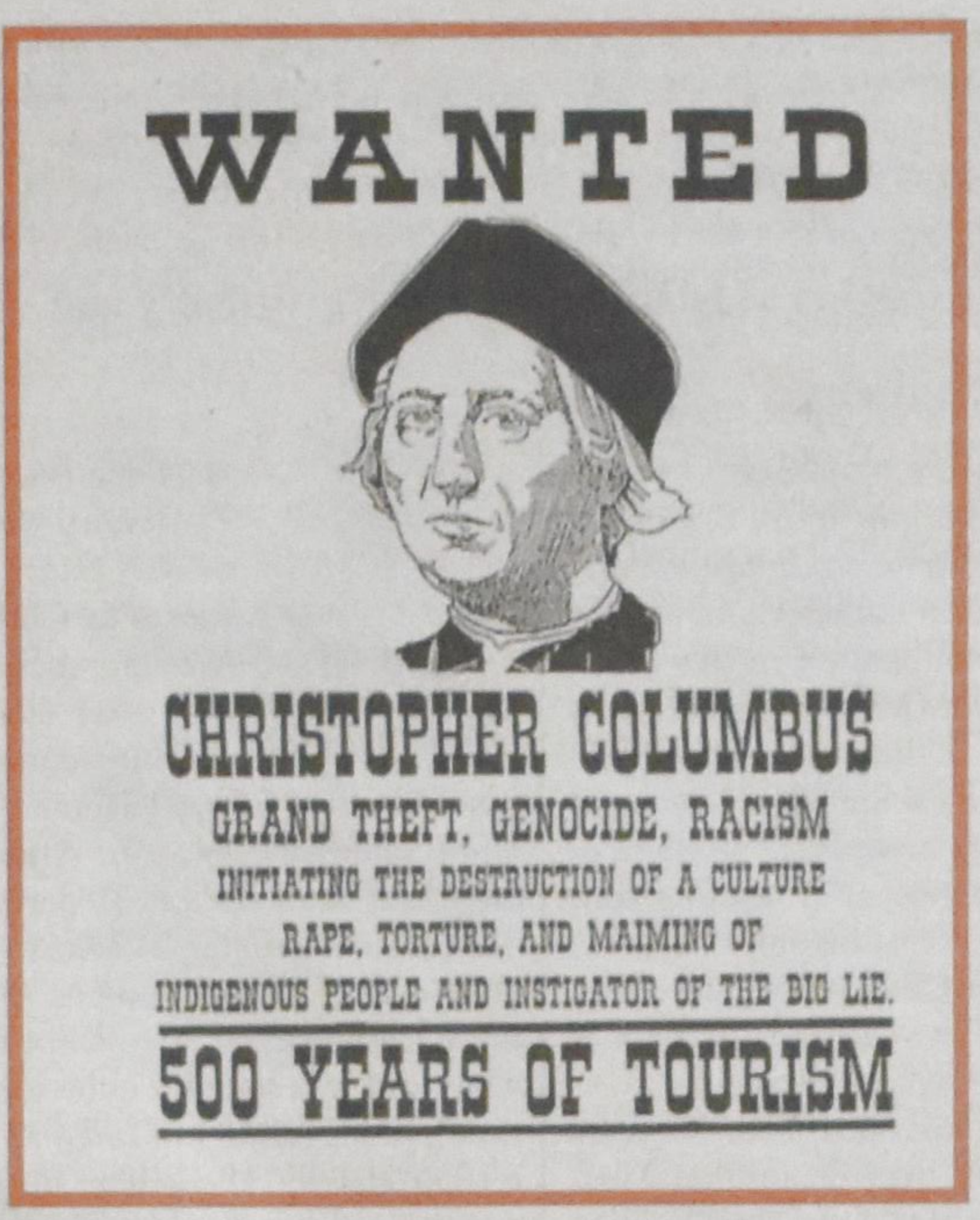
Continued on p. 11

Christopher Columbus: celebrate or excoriate?

Charles L Stanley

In recent years, with the rise of multiculturalism, Christopher Columbus has become the favorite whipping boy of the faction that believes that the culture created by Christian Europeans on the Western Hemisphere is inferior to the pristine culture of the Native Americans who lived an idyllic life in harmony with one another and nature as Mother Earth intended. This faction believes Columbus is the lead perpetrator of genocide against Native Americans through slavery, murder and biological warfare. In other words, they believe him to be an evil man. These Europeans introduced new diseases to the New World that wiped out vast populations of Native Americans while doing their best to proselytize them to Christianity and the abandonment of their native religion. Columbus was tyrannical as a governor on his island of Espaniola. His tyranny eventually led to his removal and disgrace.

At the heart of this controversy is the battle between the exclusive claims of Christianity over against the pagan religion of the Native Americans who worship the creation rather than the creator. In this case, Columbus is simply the focal point for the anti-Christian multiculturalists.



In his own words

While it is true that Columbus had many character flaws and showed poor leadership at times, the attack against him and the celebration of Columbus Day (celebrated in the United States on the day reserved for Thanksgiving in Canada) puts forth a caricature of Columbus rather than a valid profile. It should be acknowledged that although he was not the first man – or even the first European for that matter – to discover America, he was the man without whom there would be no United States of America or Canada or any of the countries of Central and South America.

The Vikings visited the Western Hemisphere around the 10th century but didn't colonize or set up any communities. Without the work of Columbus, the economic engine of the world would never have developed. The understanding of democracy and human rights would not have developed to the extent it has without Columbus and the eventual fruit of his labour. The world owes a debt of gratitude to Columbus for the manifold positive effects that flowed from his efforts.

The journal of Christopher Columbus reveals a profile of the man infrequently acknowledged. These are his words.

[1] *"It was the Lord who put into my mind (I could feel his hand upon me) the fact that it would be possible to sail from here to the Indies. All who heard of my project rejected it with laughter, ridiculing me. There is no question that the inspiration was from the Holy Spirit, because he comforted me with rays of marvelous inspiration from the Holy Scriptures....*

I am a most unworthy sinner, but I have cried out to the Lord for grace and mercy, and they have covered me completely. I have found the sweetest consolation since I made it my whole purpose to enjoy His marvelous presence. For the execution of the journey to the Indies, I did not make use of intelligence, mathematics or maps. It is simply the fulfillment of what Isaiah had prophesied....

No one should fear to undertake any task in the name of our Saviour, if it is just and if the intention is purely for his holy service. The working out of all things has been assigned to each person by our Lord, but it all happens according to his sovereign will, even though he gives advice. He lacks nothing that it is in the power of men to give Him. Oh, what a gracious Lord, who desires that people should perform for him those things for which he holds himself responsible! Day and night, moment by moment, everyone should express their most devoted gratitude to him."

These words of Columbus paint a more rounded picture of a human being who at one time "...made it [his] whole purpose to enjoy his marvelous presence." This hardly sounds like the evil man portrayed by the multiculturalists. Clearly, at a later date, Columbus succumbed to "gold fever" and became one of those "people who want to get rich [and] fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs" (1 Timothy 6:9-10 NIV).

A more honest picture

A more honest and accurate picture of Columbus is that of a Christian man who was ordained by God to open the route to the New World and who, with his success, found himself captive to sin. He was no longer the man who had it as his "whole purpose to enjoy his marvelous presence" but had traded his treasure in Christ for the treasure of gold, power and recognition.

Thanksgiving, or Columbus Day, ought to be a day in which we give thanks to God for the gracious calling of the flawed Christopher Columbus to open the pathway to the New World where later generations came to find freedom; freedom to worship freely and freedom to carve out their future in a land free of royalty and caste systems that oppress humanity; freedom to follow the God-given dreams and visions of a better life and the advancement of the Kingdom of God through the preaching of the gospel of grace. A proper vision of any human, including Christopher Columbus, is of a person created in the image of God, intended to show forth that image and yet flawed by sin awaiting the final redemption when we "will be changed" (1 Cor. 15:52 NIV).

[1] As published in *"The Light and the Glory"* by Peter Marshall and David Manuel. Published by Fleming H. Revell Company 1977. "Columbus's *Book of Prophecies*, which is available only in Spanish, and has never been published in the United States. Much of this work has been privately translated by August J. Kling, who quoted these excerpts in an article in *The Presbyterian Layman*... October, 1971." p. 360.

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to move forward with fresh energy and hope.

Doing so might mean sitting by your son's bedside in the middle of the night and reassuring him that he will be able to pass the test that he dreads so much. It might mean picking up your daughter from a friend's house at five in the morning because she's anxious and troubled. It might mean telling your son on the way out the door as he leaves for school – discouraged because a classmate is dying – to pray, "Help me, Jesus!" throughout the day.

However you encourage your child, be aware that its source is not your own strength, positive attitude or steadfast will. Parents who rely on those things will soon find their stores of encouragement depleted. Rather, our source of encouragement is "our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope." He is the only one who can encourage ours and our children's hearts and strengthen us "in every good deed and word" (2 Thessalonians 2:16-17).

Gems of generosity that you give your kids – preserving their dignity, allowing them to embrace their own suffering and encouraging them – will be characterized by God's grace, a grace that, according to Marilynne Robinson, "has a grand laughter in it" (*Gilead*, HarperCollins Publishers Ltd., 2004, pp. 207). Other people will, by God's mysterious providence, hear that "laughter" in our children's lives as they generously serve their King.

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Feature

Thoughts about Islam and Christianity – Part II

CC continues the discussion of how Christianity and Islam relate to each other in this six-part series appearing in the first issue of each month. The two participants are John H. Boer and Bert den Boggende. The two scholars wrote their answers to each question independently of each other. We encourage readers to join the discussion via letters to the editor or comments on our website. The series will also be published on our website at "www.christiancourier.ca" (click on "Feature Articles").

***John Boer** is a former missionary to Nigeria and author of some 20 books, including the 8-volume* Studies in Christian-Muslim Relations. *See his www.social-theology.com. website. He lives in Vancouver, B.C.* ***Bert den Boggende** is a retired teacher with a PhD in history. He lives in Brooks, Alberta.*

Question 2: "Is the religion of Islam a threat to Christianity and Western societies?"

Islam a threat and a challenge

John H. Boer

In a 2002 "Identity Statement," the CRC identifies secularism, not Islam, as "the primary enemy." This is supported by an REC statement of 1991 as well as by Reformational philosopher, Bennie van der Walt. The reason for this view (if you will permit me a Dutchism) is that Islam comes to you wearing wooden shoes, while secularism sneaks up on you in socks. Wooden shoes clatter; you can hear them clearly. But you can't hear someone sneaking up behind you in socks. Islam is the wooden shoe that makes its presence known everywhere. Secularism is a sock; it sneaks up on you. It is so interwoven in Western culture that we have largely become immune to its effects in our minds and hearts. Islam is a threat in some way, but not the most dangerous one.

Various forms of Islam are indeed threatening the West for a number of reasons. Secularism has created a spiritual vacuum in this culture and has blinded Westerners to the essence of religion. If it had not been for secularism, Islam would not have made the inroads it has in the West. And to the extent that secularism has made its inroads, to that extent we are handicapped in our response to Islam. It has led us to assume that Muslims coming to the West will become "reasonable" like the rest of us! That is, become secular like us. Forgive my bluntness, but I consider this a "stupid" approach by which a certain ignorant "philosopher-king" shaped our multicultural philosophy, on which subsequent immigration policies were based. Designing a national policy on the basis of ignorance is dangerous and thus a threat, a threat even to the very secularism that welcomed those Muslims.

Terrorism of any stripe among us, whether intellectual or violent, is an undeniable threat to all of us. The creeping influence of Wahabism and the presence of other forms of intolerant militant fundamentalism, sometimes in the form of violent hidden cell groups, is dangerous. These fundamentalists inculcate intolerance and hate in their schools in the West, especially in Europe and the USA. They plan violent attacks on innocent crowds. Antonides has done well to warn us in his *CC* articles.

A threat to each other

More moderate forms of Islam reject violence and have said so repeatedly. Their approach includes a philosophy of mission that will use all the tools of Western democracy to infiltrate our entire culture, especially Canada's human rights instruments. They are supported in this effort with oil money from Muslim governments and by the efforts of the Organization of Islamic Conference via the UN. They target especially Western concepts of freedom of speech under the guise of protecting their religion. There is an undeniable threat component to our Canadian secularism as well as to legitimate Christian activity in their *legally legitimate* approach.

I have been a missionary for 30 years in a country with over 60 million Muslims. Those Muslims consider Christian missions a dangerous threat, especially because they associate it with colonialism and its aftermath – and they are partially right. Most missionaries do not understand the legitimacy of this charge and do not consider themselves a threat to anyone. If it is legitimate for Christians to send missionaries to Muslim countries, then it is also legitimate for Muslims to do their mission work among us, even if we also tend to identify theirs with a kind of Muslim imperialism. So, is their legitimate mission a threat?

I would rather think of the Muslim mission as a *challenge*, a serious challenge. Our challenge is not to prevent them from carrying out their mission. Rather, it is for us to cleanse ourselves from our secularism and once again read the Bible afresh, with an open spirit not restricted by the dictates of our Western worldview. That way we may begin to acknowledge our own imperialistic history and what our countries have done and continue to do among Muslims. This cleansing above should lead us to demand that our governments and corporations reshape our relationships with the Muslim world on basis of justice and equality for all people and to quit supporting oppressive regimes for the sake of oil.

Yes, some Muslims present us with threats; others, with challenges. Imperialistic and missionary urges have always driven Islam. However, the West has been equally imperialistic with respect to the Muslim world. We should recognize that their current hostility towards us is at least partially a response to our imperialism. We have evoked it. We are seen as a threat to them as well!

Taking the sting out of Jihad

Bert den Boggende

History provides clues about Islam's possible threat to Christianity and Western society. One century after Islam's birth in seventh-century Arabia, much of the (former) Roman Empire had come under the sway of Arabs. This new empire contained about 10 percent Muslims. Three centuries later, Muslims were possibly the majority. In some areas there were no more Christians. Islam did not force conversions and was initially quite tolerant (for its time). In his *History of India* al-Biruni (973-c.1050) stated, "The Indians in our time make numerous distinctions among human beings. We [Muslims] differ from them in this, for we regard all men as equal except in piety." This rosy picture belied four kinds of division, still problematic today.

One division was between the wealthy and poor. In areas away from cities, people were often ordered to yield their surplus on unfavourable terms, and the urban proletariat remained far from a just Islamic order.

Another division was between slaves and free. Slavery was a recognized status in Islamic law, but only non-Muslims could be slaves. In *The Subversion of Christianity* (1986: ch.5), the French sociologist Jacques Ellul posited that Muslims carried off far more black slaves than Westerners ever did. In Christian Europe slavery had disappeared before the end of the first millennium. However, as Ellul contends, Islamic acceptance of slavery influenced the Christian West in accepting slavery again in the 16th century, with disastrous results for both America and Africa. But while the West abolished slavery, it is still practised in some Muslim countries, albeit illegally.

A third division was between Muslims and non-Muslims. The latter, reduced to second-class citizens, suffered from various disabilities, having to pay special taxes, being unable to give evidence in court, being excluded from positions of power, and being forbidden to build new places of worship or to repair old ones without permission. There were actually some periods of sustained persecution in North Africa, Iraq and Iran. As John Boer has shown, in *Studies in Christian-Muslim Relations* in Nigeria (2003-9), a millennium later Christians are often still second-class citizens.

The fourth division was between men and women. According to the Quran, a woman is unequal to the man: "men have authority over women because Allah has made the one superior to the other." According to sharia, every woman should have a male guardian. Such sentiments were also fairly common in the Western world into the 20th century, but are now perceived as a threat. As these examples indicate, Islam has a long history of inequality in various areas of life, inequalities now seen as threats to the Western world.

Faith and war

Albert Hourani, in *A History of the Arab Peoples* (1991: p. 57), makes an interesting observation about the early period: "The world was divided into the Abode of Islam and the Abode of War," an observation deserving further scrutiny. The Quran commands "Believers, make war on the infidels who dwell around you ... kill them wherever you find them," and that "fighting is obligatory for you." Islam's early spread was made possible through the jihad/holy war/crusade. This notion of jihad has two aspects, internal jihad and external jihad. Christians can agree with the former, the greater jihad, since it indicates warring with wrong desires and thoughts within oneself. Christians should have problems, however, with the latter.

Christianity started out as a pacifist religion, but already in the 2nd century changes were becoming apparent. In the 4th century, emperor Constantine allied the state with Christianity, an action Dutch theologian G. J. Heering called the *Fall of Christendom* (1928, 1930). One doesn't have to agree with Heering's views, but Constantine's decision opened the door to the crusades. Ellul has argued that Islam subverted Christianity into accepting this kind of war, which remained normative in the Christian tradition until the early 20th century. What distinguished the Crusades from jihad was, as Jonathan Riley-Smith has argued, that they "were collective acts of penance."

Historically there is much evidence that Islam poses a threat to Christianity; yet, it also provides evidence that Christians and Muslims have often been able to live reasonably peaceably together. In fact, in 1839 the Turkish sultan decreed that the laws should recognize no difference between Muslim, Christian, and Jewish Ottomans.

Radical Muslims have revived several of these earlier ideas, so contrary to what the West is willing to accept. The first task belongs to moderate Muslims, who should ensure that moderate Islamic views are inculcated into their young people before they are recruited by well-educated leaders. Moderates and the West should take the sting out of the radicals' amalgam of political, religious, economic and social concepts. Certainly Jesus' summary of the love commandment has a role to play.

Columns

Intangible Things
Heidi VanderSlikke

Technology and me: reason for thanksgiving?

Country living has its drawbacks. For instance, less than two years ago we finally got high-speed Internet. With great pleasure we browsed detailed websites, downloaded useful programs and easily communicated through e-mail. Then the local Internet service provider fell victim to the volatile economy. An out-of-province company swallowed up the bankrupt remains.

Quietly the new owners aimed to decommission existing towers in northern Wellington and switch all subscribers to satellite. Since we live in the most northerly part of the county, we would be among the last to get changed over. We had limited options. Service deteriorated. My irritation flourished.

After a couple of months of sporadic high-speed, one of the service reps gave me some helpful advice. "Your file takes priority when you call us every time you have a problem," he said. "After so many unresolved complaints we designate you "unserviceable" and you move up the queue for changing over to satellite."

So I called at least twice a week and sent cranky e-mails when possible. I complained, nagged and, yes, even whined a little. I resented being turned into the squeaky wheel. The words "high-speed" or "Internet" made my stomach tighten and my shoulders tense. But persistence paid off. Four months after our troubles began, we had a functional but ugly satellite dish installed on the back wall of our house.

New woes

In the midst of all that, my main computer crashed. Our local tech-expert tried valiantly to resurrect the eight-year-old machine, (positively ancient in computer terms) but without success. He managed to retrieve the data from my dinosaur and helped me to choose a replacement.

I cleared my desk of all the old cables and defunct hardware and unpacked my shiny new laptop. I breathed in the scent of new technology and opened the lid. The screen came to life, and I realized this was a totally unfamiliar machine. My fingers fumbled on the keyboard. I twitched and the cursor moved inexplicably up the screen. I accidentally deleted whole sections of text. I also discovered that I couldn't open my old files for lack of the required software.

A few days later I tried to reinstall my accounting program for the farm books. After a fruitless hour, I called the publisher and connected with a technician whose first language was obviously not English. Since my first language isn't computer, I knew this would be an ordeal. In the end I had to replace the "very old program" (2006), at a cost of $200. But she sweetly offered me unlimited tech-support for only $20 per month for the next year. I reminded myself that this was an actual human being on the other end of the phone, and politely declined.

By this time my brain felt like an antique computer about to give up the ghost. I went outside and began ripping weeds out of the flowerbeds with unbridled gusto.

Later in the afternoon I bundled up and took the Triumph to the city to buy new software. My head cleared as I rode along under the autumn sky. Render unto Microsoft and Intuit that which belongs to them. Technology forces everyone into change. It's part of the parcel.

Gained perspective

I drove past a field where the Amish were cutting cornstalks by hand and loading them onto horse-drawn wagons. They don't succumb to the tyranny of technology, I thought. But I giggled at the idea of Jack in a straw hat and suspenders. And let's face it – I'm more comfortable in coveralls than an apron.

Somehow I had lost perspective on technology. Instead of a resource to make life easier, it had become all-important in and of itself. Computers, satellites and the like – they're all just dumb machines. They have no control over me, unless I allow it. Why would I do that?

It's far better to focus on the authentic source of truth, intelligence and creativity. After all, can a computer generate the blazing colours of fall, or hang the harvest moon in its place? Can an IPod ordain praise in the cardinal's song, or can a cell phone dispatch the October winds? What technology could choreograph the silent flight of the great blue heron or design the tiny hummingbird to hover in one place? All nature speaks of God's unchanging presence, power and purpose.

So this Thanksgiving I'll count technology as just one of many blessings, even when the Lord uses it to build my character. And I'll thank God with my whole heart that his love needs no upgrades and never goes out of warranty.

Heidi VanderSlikke's email address is now hmvanderslikke@hotmail.com. She lives in Harriston, Ontario

Country living
Maynard van der Galien

Chicks in the city

I chuckle every time I read about the growth in interest in backyard chickens for urban folks. City councils of Toronto, London and St. Catharines are being requested to consider motions to allow folks to raise a few laying hens. Talks and motions do not include meat birds and roosters – they're not on the table. They get the blame for the noise making and crowing.

When a hen lays an egg, it makes noise – five minutes of noisy squawking. Good thing she only lays one egg a day!

Vancouver recently passed a bylaw that permits residents to raise a maximum of four hens in their backyard. Calgary and Edmonton have approved pilot projects for urban hens. Brampton, Niagara Falls and Guelph already allow backyard hens.

I thought it funny to read about an urban woman farmer telling St. Catharines city council that having a few chickens is the only way many people can afford to eat free-range eggs. She said a dozen organic eggs from free-range hens cost $5, making them too expensive for families. Hens, she said, will eat table scraps, grass clippings and bugs.

Oh, my! Do people know how much they'll be shelling out for ready-to-lay pullets? They are over $10 a bird. You can buy any amount – even one or two but you're going to pay extra for them. If you buy through a dealer, there's freight and there's a small order charge. The small order charge is more than the cost of a bird, according to my research.

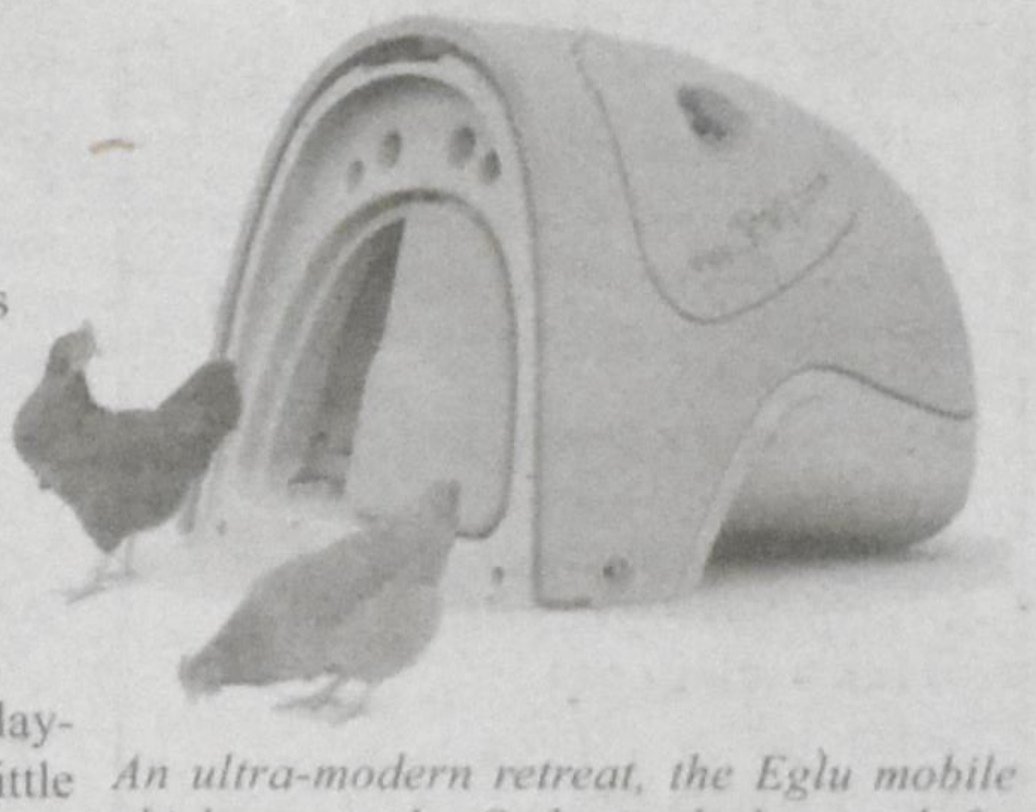
Then there's the cost of the "laying mash." Laying hens can't just be fed table scraps, grass clippings and bugs and insects. Folks with these pet hens are not going to buy the regular bag of laying mash that costs $14. You can bet they'll be buying the organic stuff. Never mind the cost!

I checked to see what it cost. It's around $26 at feed stores.

Any kind of bagged feed is expensive compared to large bulk orders of five or 10 tonnes. It's hard to make a profit in farming when buying bagged feed. That's why real farmers buy bulk feed.

What also gets me clucking are backyard hen advocates who promote the fresh eggs idea because the eggs are so much better tasting and healthier than the "factory farm" eggs.

Did you know it is impossible to peel a freshly laid egg that you hard-boil the same day or one that's a few days old? The shell sticks on and only comes off with egg on it. Eggs that are a week or two old peel perfectly. So if you need a few eggs for your fresh garden salad, don't go out looking for a "just laid fresh egg." I had flocks of 25 laying hens, and I know. Eggs that are a little older are also much better tasting.



An ultra-modern retreat, the Eglu mobile chicken coop by Omlet is sleek enough for any urban chick.

The advocates are right when they say hens will eat almost any table scraps – except orange and lemon peelings. What they're not telling you is if the hens do not get enough calcium, they will lay thin-shelled eggs that are prone to breaking. If the hen gets a taste of the egg, she will eat the egg and will be picking it with her beak to get it to break open. Hens love eggs, too. Laying hens need a good grain ration and they need oyster shell. You want to keep the shells hard.

Sure, hens will be comfortable and cozy in backyard cages in the shade picking grass and insects. But what about the cold months when it's not summer? Where do they go? How do you heat their coop? Hens can live to be seven to 10 years old. After the first year of laying eggs, a hen takes a break from egg production. What do you do with her? A hen excretes about two pounds of manure per week. If manure accumulates, it produces ammonia, which is very unpleasant for people. How will the stuff be disposed of?

Does it still sound like a good idea – the four hens? Buying your eggs is definitely the best buy!

Maynard van der Galien is a Renfrew area farmer and agricultural writer. Maynard and his wife Mae are touring California, Oregon, Washington and lower B.C. this month.

Columns

My window seat
Mendelt Hoekstra

So many reasons to say thank-you, Lord

I'm thankful. I'm thankful for many reasons, but today I'm especially thankful for the ability to learn.

Learning is not limited to the classroom, pew or Internet. Just today, I learned a new song called "Straighten Up and Fly Right," a lovely swing number written by Nat King Cole and Irving Mills in 1944. The song's theme is to "straighten up and fly right," which is what Nat King Cole heard in a sermon at his father's church. I played it for my kids and they *loved* it.

In the past week, I've learned how to install a garage door opener. I've learned that all five of my children need to be disciplined differently and that, for this week, the five different techniques worked very well. I've learned that when I put my cheque book in the top drawer of the computer desk, it is there when I need it again. I've learned that if I don't put the cheque book in the top drawer, when I'm looking for it, I wish I had put it there. The National Hockey League is about to go into its 93rd season. I'm learning that it's more and more difficult to be a fan of the Toronto Maple Leafs.

I've learned that when I leave some money in my pants, sometimes that money gets washed and comes out more brittle and my wife keeps the money.

I've learned that ketchup, cheese whiz and bologna are surprisingly good. I've learned that my six-year-old daughter thoroughly enjoys bringing home facts that she learned from school and stumping me by administering her own "test." I've learned that a sure fire way to get rid of fruit flies is to put a piece of fruit (I used a peach) in a jar covered in plastic wrap that has holes in the top. The fruit flies fly in but are unable to fly out.

I've learned that talking to young kids can make you feel young, but also make you feel old. I've learned that my son knows much more about computer gadgets than I do. He can tell me all the different versions of the Nintendo hand-held game system. When I asked him where he learned all of this, he said "you learn a lot of stuff on the school bus."

Reasons to sing

Where I work, my calling is to serve people by helping them learn social skills. This week I've learned again that progress sometimes can be visible in two minutes, such as learning to say thank-you, but can also not be shown for six years. For six years I have been working with a woman on her anxiety around other people through trying to get her to sing in front of a group of people. She has sung with me in individual sessions with skill and beauty, but couldn't handle doing it in front of a group, until this week. Six years of weekly sessions filled with encouragement and praise came to a beautiful conclusion when she sang a song in front of a dozen people in a caring, loving and safe environment. And she learned that she *can* do it.

I've learned seven times this week that God's promises are good. Seven times this week, I was blessed enough to eat three meals per day, and seven times this week I was able to tuck my kids in bed. Seven times this week the sun came up to dry the dew and the moon came up to bid us good night. His compassion never fails; his mercies are new every morning.

Mendelt Hoekstra (mendelt.hoekstra@gmail.com) is the founder and director of the Music Therapy program at Bethesda.. He lives in St. Catharines, Ont

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A recipe for Thanksgiving
Cranberry Nut Loaf

1 cup whole wheat flour
1 cup flour
⅓ cup flax seed meal
1 ½ tsp. baking powder
½ tsp. baking soda
¼ tsp. salt
Mix in a large bowl.

1 egg
¾ cup sugar
¾ orange juice
¼ cup oil
2 Tbsp orange peel (grated)
1 tsp vanilla
Whisk together in a separate bowl. Add to dry ingredients and mix minimally.

1 ½ cups cranberries
½ cup walnuts or pecans (chopped)
Fold in cranberries and half of the nuts. Spread evenly into a greased loaf pan. Sprinkle with the remaining nuts. Bake in preheated over at 350 C until the top is golden, 55-60 minutes. Let cool completely before slicing.

From Toddlers to Teens
by Denise Dykstra

She missed me

Last month I attended our church's annual women's retreat. I had a fabulous weekend and returned home relaxed and refreshed. Ray and the kids had a good weekend, too. They went out for dinner, took a trip to the art gallery, rented movies and visited friends. It should have been a win-win situation for everyone.

Unfortunately, the minute I stepped in the door at the end of the weekend the stress level in our house began to rise. After greeting me with a hug, our seven-year-old daughter, Tia, started in on a litany of complaints. That was quickly followed by a barrage of demands and, eventually, a full-blown melt-down which landed her in her room.

Talk about frustrating! I went away to get rejuvenated and within an hour of arriving home I was exhausted.

Tia enjoyed her special weekend with her dad and siblings; she was quick to admit to that. So why did she fall apart the minute I arrived home? Her explanation: "I missed you." Funny way of showing it, yes. But actually it made a lot of sense.

Search for security

Kids have a remarkable ability to appear calm and collected when inside they feel the exact opposite. They're able to hold on to their emotions until they're in a place or with a person that makes them feel secure. Then, when they're confident, they can be themselves and still be loved – they crash. They let loose by crying, lashing out in anger or becoming completely obnoxious. Tia tends to do that with me.

Tia joined our family as a foster child when she was four months old. She stayed for a year and then moved to Saskatoon to live with a paternal aunt. When that placement broke down, she came back to Edmonton so we could adopt her. We were her fourth home, and she was only 17 months old.

Ray and I knew it would take a lot of effort to convince Tia she was finally truly secure. Thankfully God's timing was perfect. Our new daughter returned a week and a half before our youngest biological child started Grade 1. Tia and I were able to spend six hours together five days a week. She got enough one-on-one time that she could develop a strong attachment to me. She learned to trust me so much she could flip into full-blown tantrum mode when I returned from a weekend away!

The Monday after the women's retreat, I kept Tia home from school. I knew she needed to rebalance. It wasn't a very fun day for me, however, and I spent much of it wondering if my small getaway was worth the hassle. Today, with a bit of distance and a healthy dose of perspective, I know that it was.

Necessary break

Spending time away from your kids is not always easy but it is important. When you get the space you need, you often miss your children. You find yourself longing for reconnection. And when you finally do reconnect – and ride out the emotional roller coaster – the quality of your interactions with your kids is usually much better.

A bit of time away also allows parents to step back and look at their children from a different perspective. It's a good way to get some new insights into various situations at home. And, of course, it provides a break from the stresses of the household. It gives parents a chance to rest and relax, revive and refresh.

The next time I go on a retreat, I'm going to be more proactive. I'll have a talk with Tia before I leave. I'll explain how she'll feel and why, and encourage her to come up with a plan to cope with those feelings. I'll let her know that I'll give her whatever she needs – some space, a hug, the details of my getaway – when I return. That way, hopefully, she won't feel as much need to fall apart.

And if being proactive doesn't work? Well, I guess I'll ride out the storm. Reminding myself over and over that it's happening because Tia feels safe with me. And although that's not always easy, it's always a blessing.

Denise Dykstra (dykstras@telus.net) lives in Edmonton, Alberta. She's a writer and mother of five.

Feature

Unassuming leader, kingdom builder: *A tribute to Wayne Drost*

Cathy Smith

"When you were born, you cried and the world rejoiced. Live your life in such a manner that when you die the world cries and you rejoice." Indian Proverb.

On September 9, 2010, after suffering from complications due to Alzheimer's, Wayne Drost, 71, went home to glory. Without a doubt, he rejoiced to meet his Saviour, but many of us cried. And, perhaps, as the proverb says, on some metaphysical plane, even the world cried. Wayne's grandson, Alex, hobbling around on crutches at the Philadelphia airport, was met by President Obama himself who stopped to inquire why he was travelling alone in such a condition. Alex replied that he was returning to university after attending his grandfather's funeral. The President asked him to pass on his condolences to the family. When I heard this remarkable true story, I thought it was fitting: a kind of holy insider joke – the most important leader on the planet pausing to pay his respects to one of God's most unassuming leaders.

It affirmed what I wanted to do ... express my gratitude for Wayne's life of visionary leadership. He was wholly dedicated to the reformational task of building up Christian institutions in education, in labour, and in the community that would function as living testaments in our secular society to the transforming power of Jesus Christ. Wayne embodied the sacrificial kind of pioneering and persevering leadership that Churchill described: "We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give."

I worked with Wayne on the Education Committee of Lambton Christian High School. I remember word for word one sentence that Wayne spoke at a meeting. The committee was having a heated discussion about something that I forget and he said, his brown eyes fierce, "I am so grateful that at the end of the day I can get down on my knees and confess the sins that I commit to my Lord." That stayed with me. A leader who admits his sin. A leader who knows things will go wrong, but leads anyway.

Contagious vision

Wayne was the first principal of London District Christian Secondary School. His impact on the Christian school movement in Ontario cannot be overstated. Gary VanArragon, former principal of Woodland Christian High, remembers Wayne's influence: "When I became a principal in 1992 and attended principals' meetings, his vision of leadership in Christian schools did a great deal to give me the courage to lead. In all the years that we worked together, his passion never failed and his commitment to Christian education remained fresh and inspiring to me. I remember high school principals' meetings ... where we spent hours in intense discussions about mission, vision and programs for Christian high schools, discussions in which Wayne played a leading role. I remember his insistence that these conversations not be abstract but focus on the actual operations of our schools. He wanted those schools to be places where students could be trained to be world changers for the kingdom of God, whether they worked on their family farms or were business executives or wherever their life's path led them."

Wayne also played a significant role in the Christian Labour Association of Canada. He served on the CLAC National Board for thirty years, including seven years as President. CLAC representative, Hank Beekhuis, reviewed Wayne's legacy of passionate commitment to that organization at the memorial service. He concluded by noting with conviction that Jesus would welcome Wayne with the words of Matthew 25:21: "Well done, good and faithful servant."

After his retirement, Wayne did not rest. He served on the Board of Vision Nursing Home in Sarnia, once again acting as chairperson and inspiring others to give of themselves. In recognition of his diligent community service, a number of scholarships offered by Vision bear his name.

Wayne also turned his attention to the church in his senior years, eager to offer his energy to local ministry. He served as chair of council and also as visiting elder. He was a good listener and his counsel always focused on the hope found in the person of Jesus Christ.

A saint, of course

Wayne's memorial service was held on September 13, 2010 at the Redeemer CRC in Sarnia. Pastor Jim Poelman commented: "If Wayne was not your friend, you would have had to wonder what was wrong, not with Wayne, but with you. Kind, generous, wise, caring, fun, true, supportive. These are some of the adjectives that spring to mind in describing Wayne. He was a leader in every community in which he lived and we are the better for his servant-like leadership."

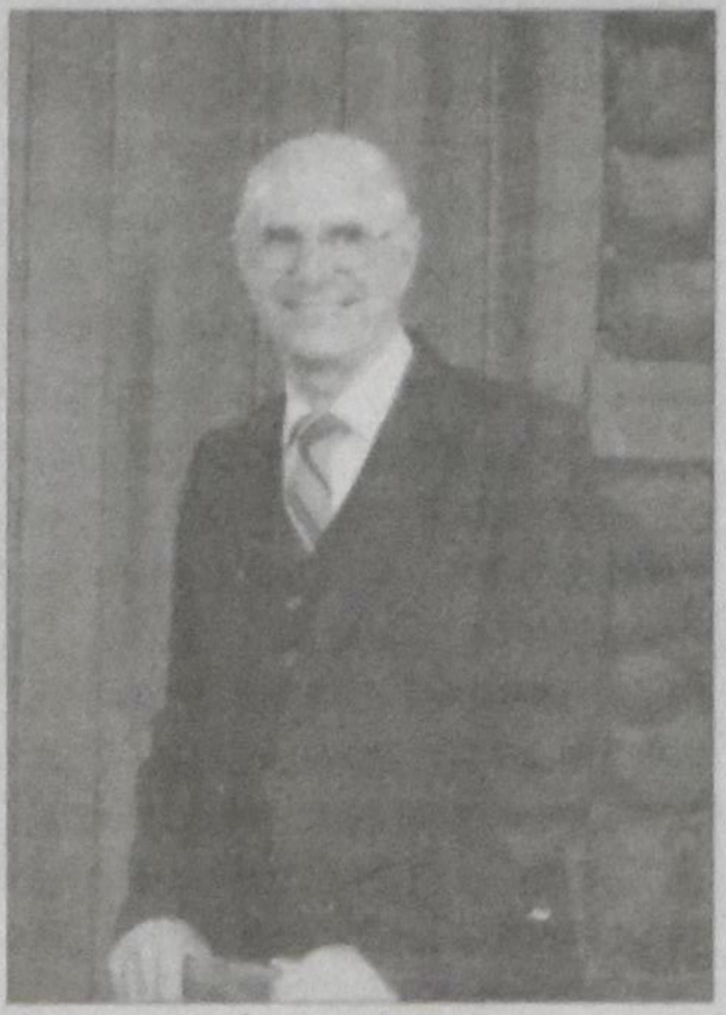
Wayne's substantive contributions to the community were supported by his family – his wife, May, his daughters and sons-in-law, grandchildren, and extended family. Also here, close to home, Wayne served as a leader, a public example of faithfulness and support. In her eulogy daughter Pam Beattie said, "Of course the most important relationship in Dad's life besides his one with the Lord has been his marriage. Dad and Mom celebrated their forty-seventh wedding anniversary this past June. The fact that we can count the number of 'serious' arguments they had during that time on one hand is a testimony not only to careful and conscientious parenting but also their devotion to each other. Our Mom and Dad's relationship has been inspirational to us all; their marriage exemplary of loving faithfulness."

Knowing that I wanted to write this tribute, May warned me not to make Wayne out to be a saint. He had his flaws and failures. But for me and countless others, he was a model of forthright and humble leadership. And we need that example of "a long obedience in the same direction" because it's our turn to take up the reformational challenge.

Henry Adams said, "A teacher affects eternity; no one can tell where his influence stops." The Apostles' Creed calls the church "the communion of saints." So, Wayne, my friend, I will name you teacher and saint and seek to follow. Thanks for showing me the way.

A loyal friend and humble servant of the Lord: *A tribute to James Joosse*

Harry Antonides



James Joosse: July 23, 1925 - August 29, 2010

I first got to know Jim in the fall of 1948, when my brother and I found work in Sarnia, and Jim and Lena Joosse were kind enough to take us in as their boarders. During the summer of 1949 we went back to farm work in Leamington. Then I boarded again with the Joosse family from the fall of 1949 till June 1952, when Janet and I got married in Sarnia.

In the early fifties, the idea and reality of a Christian labour union began to take hold in different parts of the country, mostly among recent immigrants from Holland. We had many discussions about the pros and cons of such a heady concept. And we had no idea of what we were getting into. Some said it could not, and need not, be done.

But a core of people was convinced of one thing: Canada needed a union that bases its purpose and practices on the conviction that Christ is Lord over every area of our lives. Quite a few of these people happened to be living in Sarnia. But to put that grand vision into practice was a challenge that required strong and visionary leadership.

Jim, who was then a farm worker, became part of a small group who took on the job of providing the leadership of this fledgling union. He attended many meetings, mostly in the Hamilton area, that demanded a lot of time and driving in all kinds of weather conditions. After a full day's work, Jim would attend the meetings and then return home in the wee hours of the morning to start the next workday only a few hours later.

This sort of undertaking, which had never been done before in Canada, required a lot of time, energy and determination. It required the sort of selfless dedication that Jim brought to this task and that uniquely qualified him to provide the leadership at that critical time. Without that sort of leadership there would not have been the CLAC – an organization that since that time has grown in amazing ways. In recognition of Jim's contribution, he was given the title of honourary president.

Of course, Jim would be very quick to say that he did no more than the other pioneers who stood with him at that time. And it is true that no one man alone could accomplish what was done then. But it is also true that this particular endeavour required strong and effective leadership of the person who took on the task of president.

Jim presided over many meetings including the founding convention of the CLAC in 1952. In short, he was there at a critical time when we had to overcome many objections and obstacles.

A few years later, Jim and Lena decided to tackle another large challenge. Jim went to study for the ministry in the Christian Reformed Church. He completed those studies and since 1960 served churches in Dresden, Georgetown, New Market, Edmonton, Calgary, and Kentville, NS.

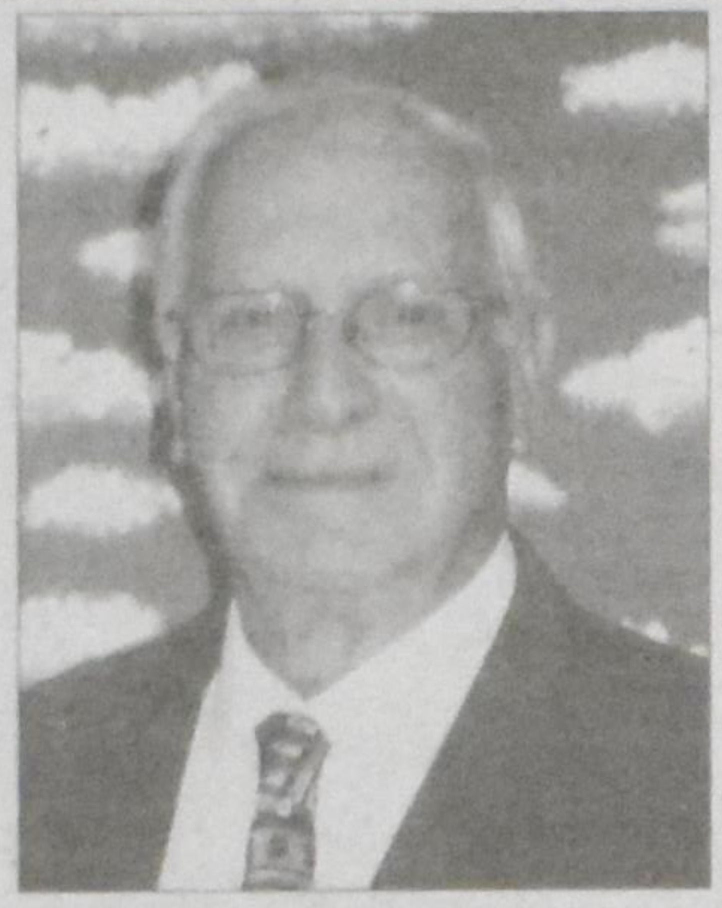
I was 17 years old when I first met Jim. I was a recent immigrant from Holland, green as grass. Jim had attained the ripe old age of 23. I remember when he turned 25, and I thought of him as someone who was way ahead of me in understanding and living the Christian faith.

Jim reminds me of the gifts of faith, hope and love. This is not to put anyone on a pedestal, but to acknowledge that Jim's life was lived in all humility in a way that touched untold numbers of people and helped them in their Christian walk.

Particularly, he helped the CLAC to make its first hesitant steps. For that I thank the Lord. And I thank Jim.

Classifieds

Birthday



1930 September 29 2010

With thankful hearts we celebrate the **80th birthday** of

Bert VanderMeer

His wife, Clara, five sons and their wives, 19 grandchildren & 8 great-grandchildren are thankful for God's faithfulness to you and his blessings through 80 years.

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Niagara Falls ON L2J 2K2

Anniversaries

1950 October 12 2010

Because of a beautiful mixture
of God's gifts
and their faithfulness

Evert and Tine de Ruiter

may celebrate something
very special and precious,
their **60th Wedding Anniversary.**

We as their children
and grandchildren
wish to acknowledge
and thank God and them.

Tom & Debbie
Mike, Joanna, David, Lindsay, Laura

Jennifer

Brian & Janet
Tine, Eric, Michelle

Home address:
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Brampton ON L6Y 5P2

With joy and thankfulness, we praise God with our parents,

Dick and Nell Diepeveen

celebrating **60 Years Of Marriage** on October 11th.

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Nelly and Rolf Schipfel, *Vernon*
Elisabeth and John Bron, *Surrey*
Len and Susan Diepeveen, *Halifax*
Along with their grandchildren and great-grandchildren

And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.
Matthew 20:28

Best wishes can be sent to: 208 - 9030 158 Street
Surrey BC V4N 5G4

1950 October 8 2010

As for me and my house,
we will serve the Lord.
Joshua 24:15

With happy hearts
we celebrate the
60th Wedding Anniversary
of

Cor and Tina Bos (nee **Bakker**)

We are thankful for
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and for the faithful example
you have set for us.

With love from your children
and grandchildren

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Obituaries

Jacob Harm (Jack) Thalen

Passed away peacefully to be with his Lord on September 18, 2010 at Hospice Wellington in Guelph at the age of 88.

Jack was the beloved husband of Joanne for almost 63 years. Dear father of Harry (Jenny) Thalen, Nellie (Frank) Bergman, Eric (Elizabeth) Thalen, Jack (Jen) Thalen, Hilda (John) Van Gyssel and Joanne (Bruce) Adema. He also will be missed by his many grandchildren, great-grandchildren, extended family and friends.

Jack has been a very committed member of the First Christian Reformed Church in Guelph for over 50 years. After his retirement from the Dutch Toko stores in Guelph and Hamilton he was the national representative for the Back to God Ministries International until 1996.

The family would like to express a special thank you to the many care givers who assisted him with his dialysis and also to the staff at Hospice Wellington.

Home address: Joanne Thalen
Unit 213 - 70 Woodlawn Rd E
Guelph ON N1H 7W7

On September 12, 2010

Nell (Neeltje) Geertsema nee Nieuwland

went home to be with her Lord
after fighting a courageous battle with cancer.
Nell was born on January 29, 1933
in Bergschenhoek, the Netherlands and
immigrated to Canada with her family at age 18.

She is lovingly remembered by :
Her husband of 55 years: Bill Geertsema, *Thamesville, ON*
Her children: John W. and Janet Geertsema, *Barrie, ON*
Andrew Geertsema and Lee Savage, *Gilford, ON*
Gary and Bonnie Geertsema, *Bradford, ON*
Rob and Barb Geertsema, *Thamesville, ON*
Mark and Dianna Geertsema, *Bradford, ON*
Monica and David Jessop, *Beeton, ON*
She will be missed by her 18 grandchildren
and 9 great-grandchildren.

A memorial service was held on Wednesday, September 15, 2010 at Grace Christian Reformed Church in Chatham, Ontario with Rev. William Koopmans officiating.

Home address: 23624 Huff Sideroad RR 7
Thamesville ON N0P 2K0

Rev. John Van Dyk

Passed away peacefully on September 21, 2010
at the age of 85 at St. Catharines, Ontario.

Beloved and devoted husband of Paula (Hasselman).
Loving father and opa to: Karen Van Dyk
Rev. Michael (Barbara) Van Dyk
David, Steven and Paul.
Dear brother of Dr. John & Susan Van Dyk of *Marion, Illinois.*
Predeceased by brothers Bill & Alex Van Dyk of *Orillia, Ontario.*

John was a minister in the Christian Reformed Church for over 50 years where he faithfully served his Lord and Saviour in many churches across Canada.

A celebration of John's life was held on
October 2, 2010 at Ina Grafton Gage Retirement Village
where John and Paula resided for the last eight years.

Corresponding address: Karen Van Dyk
285 Lakeshore Road, St Catharines ON L2M 1S1

Enschede Oshawa
July 3, 1935 September 8, 2010

The Lord took

Henny Witvoet-Oldejans

to himself when she was weary and burdened,
and he gave her rest.
Henny was predeceased by her husband, George Witvoet, in 2001.

Beloved mother of: Evan Witvoet
Rhonda & Arnold VanderMeer
Michael & Diane Witvoet
Brian Witvoet
Ian & Debbie Witvoet
and grandchildren: Joshua, Heather, Cara, Jarod, Andrew, Marina, Bethany, Jenna, Holly, Rachel, Matthew & Danielle.
Henny is survived by her sister, Alice Witvoet, and predeceased by her brothers John, George and Hank.

Correspondence: Evan Witvoet, 388 Pompano Court
Oshawa ON L1K 1M9

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Heritage Fellowship CRC of Brampton
announces the retirement of
PASTOR REV. HERMAN PRAAMSMA
after 40 years of service.

Pastor Praamsma and his wife Diane faithfully served the churches of Bethel, Waterdown; Rehoboth,Toronto; Maranatha, Edmonton; Fellowship, Toronto; Correctional Institute, Brampton; Immanuel, Brampton, and for the last twelve years at Heritage Fellowship CRC.

An evening of thanksgiving is planned for the congregation Friday, October 29, 2010.
Rev. Praamsma plans to preach his farewell sermon in the morning service of Sunday, Oct. 31, 2010. A coffee social will follow.

For information contact L. van Ginkel at 905-796-3196 or lvanginkel@sympatico.ca

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Information about CCS is presented at www.communitychristianschool.ca. An information package is available upon request. Interested applicants can send their résumé, statement of faith, and philosophy of Christian education.

Contact: **Nancy Schoenmaker**
6877 Southvillage Drive, Greely ON K4P 0A4
nancyplus4@hotmail.com / 1-613-821-5443

To receive full consideration applications must be received by October 31, 2010.

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Committee "Netherlands Bazaar" Christmas Food Parcels

Committee Netherlands Bazaar is depending on your co-operation to successfully identify those families who will receive a Christmas food parcel. If you know of any family of Dutch heritage in Ontario, in extreme financial circumstances, we need to hear from you before Friday, November 12th, 2010.

Please note that we must have specific information in order to send the appropriate food parcel, such as name(s) of recipient(s), address, contact person, ages of children, as well as the reason for aid. Also the telephone number of a contact person who can verify this information and the signature of the contact person are required. All submitted names will be kept in strict confidence. The families who received a parcel last year will not automatically receive one this year. We require confirmation of their current circumstance. If you have questions, please contact: Ge Spaans 905-477-1243, Jannie Thomas 416-498-8706, Dia Pos 905-854-5102 or Henny DeCloe 416-222-1677.

Please forward information by Friday, Nov. 12th, to Mrs. G. Spaans, Committee Netherlands Bazaar", 15 Pavillion Street, Unionville ON L3R 1N8.

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Liberty or LIABILITY?

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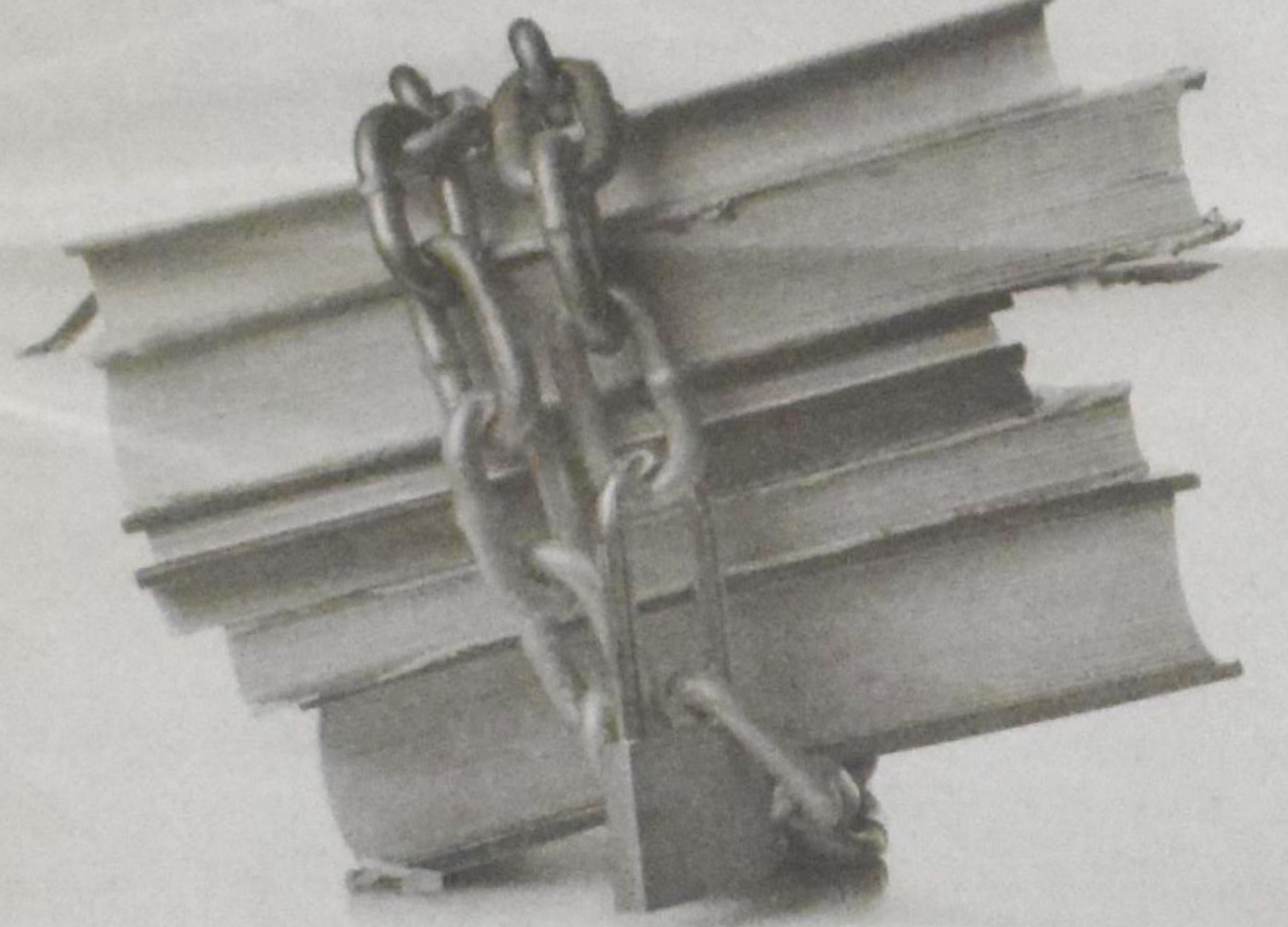
OCTOBER 27, 2010
REDEEMER UNIVERSITY COLLEGE



Redeemer University College and Cardus present a day of lecture and discussion on the legal and political role of religion in confessional institutions. Keynotes include Stanley Carlson-Thies (President, Institutional Religious Freedom Alliance), Don Hutchinson (Director, Centre for Faith and Public Life, EFC) and Kevin Boonstra (Editor, LexView).

This is a free event open to all. For more information, please visit ***www.redeemer.ca/liberty*** *or* ***go.cardus.ca/liberty****, or contact Marlene Raddatz at 905.648.2139 x 4414*

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Oct 13 Sunview Gardens presentation 7 pm at Beacon Christian School, **St. Catharines**. See ad on p. 20.

Oct 16 Diaconal Ministries invites you to attend a Day of Encouragement at Hamilton District Christian High, **Ancaster**. Contact your deacons for more information or visit www.diaconalministries.com to register.

Oct 16,17 Duncan Christian School 50th Anniversary. Contact: development@duncanchristianschool.ca or 250-746-3654 ext. 292

Oct 17 Dutch Service will be held in the **Ancaster** Christian Reformed Church at 3:00 p.m. Rev. Ralph Koops will be preaching.

Oct 20 Leendert Kooij and his O.C.M.A. Choir will do a benefit concert for Eurovangelism/EuroAid at the Hebron Christian Reformed Church in **Whitby**. We invite you to join us for a great evening! Please call us at 1-866-630-6301 for more info.

Oct 23 Leendert Kooij and his O.C.M.A. Choir will do a benefit concert for Eurovangelism/EuroAid at St. George's Anglican Church in **Guelph** We invite you to join us for a great evening! Please call us at 1-866-630-6301 for more info.

Oct 27 Liberty or Liability - The Future of Institutional Religious Freedom presented by Redeemer University College & Cardus. For more information, please visit www.redeemer.ca/liberty or go.cardus.ca/liberty, or contact Marlene Raddatz at 905.648.2139 x 4414

Oct 29 Pastor Herman Praamsma retirement celebration at Heritage Fellowship CRC, Brampton, ON, For information contact L. van Ginkel at 905-796-3196 or lvanginkel@sympatico.ca See ad Sep. 13 issue.

Nov 5 Christian Festival Concert 7:30 pm, Roy Thomson Hall, **Toronto**. See ad.

Nov 6 Road2Hope Run/walk for WWCS. See ad this issue.

Nov 8 12:00 p.m. Jonathan Oldengarm, organist, and the Ottawa Bach Choir (Lisette Canton, Director) present choral and organ works by Bach, Buxtehude, Poulenc, Liszt and others at Roy Thomson Hall, 60 Simcoe St., **Toronto**. Free admission. For information call 416-872-4255 or visit www.roythomson.com.

Nov. 9 1:00 p.m. Jonathan Oldengarm, organist, plays works by Gigout, Handel and Mendelssohn at St. James Cathedral, King & Church Sts., **Toronto**. Free admission. For information, call 416-364-7865.

Nov 18 Annual Church & Charity Seminar hosted by Carters Professioan Corp. from 8:30 am to 3:30 pm at Portico Community Church, 1814 Barbertown Rd, **Mississauga**, Ontario. To register, call Toll Free 1-877-942-0001 x230, Fax 519-942-0300, Email seminars@carters.ca or visit website www.carters.ca.

Dec 11 Christmas sing-a-long concert with the Liberation Choir 7 pm. at Redeemer University in **Ancaster**. See ad this issue.

UPCOMING EVENTS FOR WORLDWIDE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS-CANADA

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News

Considering Lilies

"But the Christian life, the spiritual life, is not about information or getting things done. It's about living.
I want to live. I want to find out how.
I want encouragement to live. I need companions in living."
– Eugene Peterson (*IMAGE* magazine)

James Schaap

SIOUX CENTER, Iowa – Somehow, I sing when I read what Eugene Peterson says.

Years ago, when I taught in a public high school, I was a church youth leader, board member of two church-related, non-profits – *and* my wife and I worshipped *twice* every Sunday, sometimes even during the week. My totally un-churched colleagues couldn't believe it – they asked me if I was in a cult.

Yet "I want to live. I want to find out how," sounds strangely wonderful today, even though it seems more than a little uncharacteristic from the likes of Eugene Peterson, who's written over 30 books, not to mention his own hugely popular revision of the Bible.

Eugene Peterson doesn't know? He's 78 years old, read in every corner of North America and the world, evangelical Christianity's own Solomon when it comes to what he calls "spiritual theology," and the man is still looking? Give me a break. It's disconcerting.

Yet somehow it resonates because I'm sometimes just plain tired.

Some items from my own personal basement museum got tossed this summer, when monsoon rains came to Iowa and turned the basement into a water slide. We scrambled, and stuff got unceremoniously dumped. But the truth is, much more is going to have to go – and soon, because what's down here is totally meaningless to anyone else, but imbued – each picture, plaque and trophy – with a warm radioactive memory, the detritus of a lifetime of hard work. Much of it is, I think, church-related – even, if I may be so bold as to use ancient language, kingdom-related. I've put a lot of time in, to be sure. You know what I mean.

Not long ago, my granddaughter, down here in the basement office, looked around and asked me, sweetly, "Grandpa, what are you going to do with all this stuff when you die?"

Good question.

Maybe I'm just of age to dream about a lawn chair, bocce ball, some Florida condo. Retirement, after all, is just around a corner, and Peterson passed that milestone awhile back.

But there's more to his odd plea: "I want to live. I want to find out how."

Two ways of looking

I've been thinking about this picture I grabbed from a flower outside, shortly after that monsoon. Something about it is just wonderful – an otherwise unseen community at work. I love the way the camera takes you places you otherwise don't see, or take the time to.

But something strikes me as sad too: these creatures were so insanely busy they didn't notice the monster behind a lens not even an inch away. That busy.

Is that good or bad?

Last night I was putting some ancient slides into digital format, when I found one that featured six young couples, including us – all the kids barely in school. We had taken a day in the meadow of a colleague's farmland for a Laura Ingalls Wilder-style picnic. The kids are having a ball in a frame of prairie grass, ample picnic baskets out before us. We were young, heady parents, ready to take on the world.

That day, no one could have guessed that only four of those couples would make it – two burned and crashed. Back then we were reliving pioneer days, winsome smiles all around because we too were the pioneers, building a culture. Maybe the reason I sing with Peterson is just me: I'm getting older.

But the times have changed too. It's difficult to get students excited about taking on "the world" today because they're already more deeply "in the world" than I was at their age, the child of an ethnic and religious ghetto. When I was a kid, "Go ye into the world" meant something liberating, something altogether different from what it means for college students who've never *not* been "on-line."

A couple years ago, someone asked me to read a story at a Christian high school community meeting at which a proposal to add, big-time, to the school was on the table. It sailed through a meager crowd, little more than a whisper. The administrator was blown away because that would not have happened only a decade before, he said, when combative voices with thick Dutch accents would have asked tough questions.

We're in a different world. These days, the most-read Dutch theologian is likely Henri Nouwen.

Maybe all of us, even Eugene Peterson, are simply negotiating what I believe Herman Bavinck once characterized as the two required "conversions" of the Christian life – the first, to Christ; the second, back to the world. We've been "out there," and now we need to reverse ground for a spell, recharge the wattage from that earlier "conversion."

The "spiritual life" is not only about "getting things done," Peterson says, and I sing.

Consider the lilies, Christ told us.

Pardon me while I get out the camera.

James C. Schaap has been teaching literature and writing at Dordt College in Sioux Center, Iowa, for more than 30 years. During that time, he's written many books and articles, including CRC Family Album: the Unfinished Story of the CRC. *His latest book is a collection of meditations titled* Sixty at Sixty: A Boomer Looks at the Psalms *(Faith Alive, 2008).*

Odds and Trends

From catastrophe to cocktail

With a death toll of over 1500 people, the sinking of the RMS *Titanic* remains one of the deadliest peace-time disasters in history. In 1997, director James Cameron used famous faces like Leonardo DiCaprio to revive public interest in *The Titanic*'s tragic tale. Now, almost a hundred years after an iceberg defeated the world's largest passenger ship, you can stage your own re-enactment without Hollywood's help. A new product from a company called *Fred and Friends* freezes ice in the shape of miniature Titanics and icebergs. The tiny ice-cube Titanic has another chance to beat the iceberg, this time floating in a party drink. Critics can't seem to agree, however, on whether the "Gin and Titonic" is funny or offensive. Can a catastrophe be classy? One pun may not be enough to save this gimmick.

How to combat air pollution

The air in your living room, according to Laura Sevier in *The Ecologist*, is a "toxic brew" of "heavy metals, dangerous chemicals and hazardous dyes." But *Radish* magazine's Darcy Maulsby has an easy solution: "NASA-sanctioned houseplants [that] purify indoor air." NASA has analyzed plants to find the best ones to keep future space stations in running order by removing harmful gases from the air. Their findings recommend a minimum of two plants per 100 square feet.

The most popular, low-maintenance varieties are pothos (a good climber), philodendron (very hardy), spider plants (excellent for hanging), weeping fig (or Ficus benjamina), and snake plant (thrives in any light). *Radish* points out that newly-constructed buildings, tightly sealed to conserve energy, can trap pollutants inside, making pollution-fighting plants even more important

Angela Reitsma Bick

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